

THE ARGOSY.

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THE GREY MONK.

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CHAPTER XXX.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

IT was evident that Sir Gilbert Clare was very much put out by the scene just enacted on the terrace. As soon as the last of the servants had gone back indoors he re-entered the drawing-room, where Trant now proceeded to light the centre lamp and the candles in the girandoles, and resumed his seat by Lady Pell. Luigi and Ethel, at the opposite end of the long room, were engaged in turning over a book of foreign photographs. He was always glad to put as wide a space as possible between his "grandfather" and himself, and she had tact enough to be aware that after so untoward an interruption, the baronet might not be in the humour for any more music.

"Now, who," said Sir Gilbert, "can have put the notion into that silly girl's head about the so-called Grey Brother? (Of course *you* know the family legend, Louisa.) She has only been about half-a-year in my service, and, if I remember aright, she came to us all the way from Sussex."

"But she did not mention the Grey Brother by name, did she?" queried her ladyship. "As I understood her, what she said was, that when opposite the drawing-room windows she was confronted by a tall, dark, hooded figure—nothing more specific than that."

"And what could such a description refer to, pray, except to the Grey Brother? I suppose that in the servants' hall such legends die hard, and that any story, or incident which savours of the supernatural, is handed down from one generation of domestics to another. If we could get to the bottom of the affair, I have no doubt we should

find that this Sussex girl has had the legend recounted to her by somebody, and that it so impressed her imagination that the first time she finds herself alone in the grounds in the dusk of evening, she is prepared to distort every queer-looking shrub or bush into a semblance of the family apparition, and, indeed, would feel herself rather aggrieved than otherwise should it fail to appear to her. You may rely upon it, that girl Ogden will be the heroine of the servants' hall for half a year to come."

"Still, it seems clear to me that she saw *something*. I never witnessed a more genuine case of fright. But of course the question is what that something was."

"Had there been a moon, I should have said that what frightened her was nothing more substantial than her own shadow. In all likelihood it was a poacher, or a tramp, or some other vagabond who was prowling about where he had no business to be. And that reminds me of something."

He rose and rang the bell, and then to Trant, who responded to the summons, he said: "Send for Bostock, and bid him and his man keep a sharp look-out to-night. I have reason to suppose that there are one or more bad characters lurking about the grounds."

Bostock was the keeper who, some years before, had succeeded Martin Rigg, the latter having been permanently disabled in a poaching affray. Martin Rigg, it may be remembered, was the last to bid God-speed to Alec Clare on that night when Sir Gilbert pronounced sentence of banishment on his eldest son.

"I presume from what you said just now," remarked Lady Pell when Trant had come and gone, "that of late years you have not been troubled by any of these visitations, or appearances, or whatever is the proper term for them?"

"Not for twenty years, or more, so that I felt myself justified in hoping that the Grey Brother had died a natural death and been buried out of sight for ever. Now I come to think, it was a little while before Alec left home—um—um—for the last time that we were bothered and annoyed with quite a series of appearances, or what were said to be such."

"Ah, poor Alec—poor boy—what a fate was his!" exclaimed her ladyship with a sigh. "The apparition has never manifested itself to you, Cousin Gilbert?"

"Certainly not," replied Sir Gilbert with emphasis. "Nor to my father before me. My mother *fancied* that she caught a glimpse of the figure on several occasions, not outside the house where it is generally said to be seen, but indoors, in the picture-gallery, or on the stairs, or elsewhere; but she was an excitable woman—excitable in more ways than one—and my father always pooh-poohed her statements of what she professed to have seen as so many hallucinations, although, as a matter of course, he wholly failed in converting her to his own point of view."

Next morning, on coming down to breakfast, Lady Pell found by her plate a black-bordered letter bearing a French postmark. At sight of it she exclaimed: "Then the poor child is dead! What a pity! And he was the only grandson."

Sir Gilbert, who was already seated at table, glanced inquiringly at her.

"I think I told you," she said in answer to the look, "that it was originally my intention, after leaving the Shrublands, to have gone direct to France, there to stay till well on for Christmas with a very old friend of mine, indeed, the only one of my school companions whose friendship I have retained till now. On the eve of starting I received a letter from Julie in which she asked me, in consequence of her grandson's illness, to put off my visit till I should hear from her again. It was merely a feverish cold, she wrote, and not the slightest danger was apprehended. But this black-bordered missive, even before I open it, tells me but too surely what has happened."

She said no more, but opened the letter. Tears were in her eyes when she laid it down a couple of minutes later. For awhile the meal progressed in silence.

Sir Gilbert was the first to speak. "Am I right, Louisa, in supposing that, owing to your friend's loss, your visit to France will have to be postponed indefinitely?" he asked.

"Postponed till spring undoubtedly. Madame de Bellecour presses me to go after a week or two, but at such a time I should feel myself little better than an intruder."

"In that case there can be no valid reason why you should not prolong your visit at the Chase, and give to us the time you originally intended to devote to your friend in France."

Lady Pell in the act of helping herself to sugar considered for a few moments. Then she said: "Thank you for your offer, Cousin Gilbert. I will think it over and let you know my decision later on."

After breakfast Lady Pell went to her room to write some letters. At such times, as Ethel was aware, she preferred to be alone. So, it being one of those lovely autumn mornings which are among the choicest of the year, Ethel put on her hat and quitted the house with the intention of exploring the grounds, and making herself better acquainted with the Chase and its surroundings.

What the uppermost subject in her thoughts was as she went sauntering along, careless whether she took this path or the other, she was never afterwards able to remember. All she knew was that she was softly crooning a lately-learnt ballad which had taken her fancy, and that she felt quietly and sunnily happy, when all at once, without an instant's warning, and unknown to herself, she touched the turning-point of her destiny.

Ethel, who had stopped in her walk, in order to inhale the fragrance of some late-blooming roses, hearing the sound of approaching footsteps on the gravel, turned her head to see who was coming, and

a moment later, round a clump of evergreens, appeared the forgotten face and figure of Everard Lisle, who was on his way to his daily duties at the Chase.

The two were within a dozen yards of each other, and the moment Lisle's eyes fell on Ethel, he came to an abrupt halt, paralysed as it were by sheer amazement. Ethel's heart seemed to stop beating for an instant or two, and then went on with a bound, while a lovely flush suffused her face and throat, and seemed to tingle down to her very finger-tips. Everard, on the contrary, had turned almost as pale as a corpse. Ordinarily one of the most self-possessed of men, he had now to draw three or four laboured breaths before a word would come.

After all, it was Ethel who first broke the silence. She advanced a little way and held out her hand with a smile which to Everard seemed little less than heavenly. "And is it really you, Mr. Lisle?" she said. "I could scarcely believe at first that my eyes were not playing me false. Withington Chase was the place, was it not, to which you told me you had come when—when I saw you last? But I only heard the name once, and that must be my excuse for having forgotten it. In any case, I am very glad to meet you again. It is only three weeks since I left dear St. Oswyth's, and yet when I look back it seems like an age."

By this time Lisle had hold of her hand, which he seemed in no hurry to release.

"Yes, this is my home, Miss Ethel, and has been ever since I left my father's roof. Not the Chase itself, mind you," he smilingly added, "but a much humbler domicile just beyond the park. Sir Gilbert and my father were at the same college somewhere about half a century ago, so when the former found himself in want of an assistant—a sort of half secretary and half bailiff—he called to mind the fact that the man whose good fortune it had been in years gone by to save his life, and whom he had never quite lost sight of since, had a son, and offered him the post. And now that I have told you so much about myself, allow me to ask, in the name of all that's wonderful, how I happen to find you here?"

"Oh, there's nothing in the least wonderful about that," replied Ethel, who by this time had regained possession of her hand. "I am here as companion, for the time being, to Lady Pell, who is a relative of Sir Gilbert. Of course you have heard that my dear aunts have lost the greater part of their fortune and have been compelled to leave their old home?" Everard nodded. "Well, through Lady Pell, my aunts obtained a tenant for Vale View House in the person of her stepdaughter, and that was how she and they became acquainted. Her companion being away on account of illness, I am filling the position *pro tem*."

"I hope Lady Pell intends making a long stay at the Chase."

"She came, intending to stay only a couple of days, but, as the

result of a letter she received this morning, it seems not unlikely that her visit will be prolonged."

"With all my heart I hope it may," said Everard. There was a fervour in his voice, and a fire in his eyes, which brought back the glow to Ethel's cheeks and recalled, as though they related to an event of yesterday, every word and look of Lisle at that interview on her birthday, when he pleaded his suit with so much earnestness, but pleaded in vain. Well, Everard Lisle was not like some people.

Her heart whispered to her: "He loves you still. You are as dear to him at this moment as you ever were."

She did not speak, but turned away her head and gazed across the park.

"And now I must leave you—for the present," said Everard. "I have my morning's work to attend to, and Sir Gilbert likes punctuality in others if he does not always practise it himself. I often lunch and dine at the Chase. Let us hope that the presence of Lady Pell will not have the effect of depriving me of a privilege which I never valued so highly as I do at this moment."

He smiled, lifted his hat, and went his way.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LUIGI'S ESCAPE.

MR. KINABY'S dog-cart, now that the land-steward himself was almost wholly confined to the house, was at the service of Everard Lisle, and he generally made use of it, if the weather happened to be bad, when he was invited to dine at the Chase, thereby saving himself a long wet tramp there and back through the park.

To-day the fine forenoon had degenerated into a wet evening, and when Lisle had given his horse and trap into charge of the stable help and, after divesting himself of his wet mackintosh, had made his way to the drawing-room, he found there the Baronet, Lady Pell and Miss Thursby. Sir Gilbert, in his abrupt fashion, at once proceeded to introduce him to the ladies. After bowing to her ladyship, Everard held out his hand to Ethel, saying as he did so: "I have had the pleasure of meeting Miss Thursby on more than one occasion before to-day; in point of fact, we happen to come from the same town, St. Oswyth's."

"And a very charming, old-fashioned town it is," said her ladyship; "and some of the people, whose acquaintance I made there"—with a significant glance at Ethel—"I found to be quite as nice as the place."

At this moment Trant entered the room with the announcement that dinner was served. "That's all very well," said Sir Gilbert testily, "but what has become of my grandson? Where is Mr.

Lewis? Send up to his room at once, Trant, and tell him that dinner is waiting." Then turning to Lady Pell, he added: "I hate unpunctuality, especially at meal-times. It would serve the young dog right to make him go without his dinner."

"Is he often behind time?" queried her ladyship.

"No, I can't say that he is. He knows that I wouldn't put up with it."

"Then you can afford, for once in a way, to overlook his remissness. Besides, it would be unfair to blame him before hearing what he may have to say for himself."

"Oh, he'll have some plausible excuse or other, I don't doubt," growled Sir Gilbert. "You would be clever to catch him without one."

Trant reappeared. "Mr. Lewis is not in his room, Sir Gilbert. It seems that he left the house about ten o'clock, and has not been seen since."

Sir Gilbert's eyebrows came together in a frown. Then he shook himself, and forcing a smile, said: "In that case there is no need to wait. Perhaps they have persuaded him to stay and dine at the vicarage, although, when that has been the case before, he has always sent me word." With that he offered his arm to Lady Pell and Everard did the same to Miss Thursby.

When dinner was over there was no sitting out of doors as on the preceding evening. In the drawing-room, the lighted lamps, the drawn curtains and the wood fire, served as so many reminders of the dying year. This evening, out of compliment to her ladyship, Sir Gilbert forewent his usual game of chess. At his request Ethel played and sang for upwards of an hour, during which time it was Lisle's happy privilege to turn over her music and hover round her generally. Between whiles Sir Gilbert and her ladyship, who were seated considerably apart from the young people, conversed in low tones.

Ten o'clock struck all too soon for Everard Lisle. It was his appointed hour for leaving the Chase. When he had taken leave of the ladies, Sir Gilbert quitted the room with him. While the dog-cart was being brought round and he was inducting himself into his mackintosh, the baronet sent a servant to ascertain whether his grandson had yet reached home. No, Mr. Lewis was not in his room, neither had anyone seen him, was the word brought back. "I shall sit up for him, if it be till six o'clock in the morning," said Sir Gilbert grimly to Lisle. With that, he nodded a curt, but not unkindly good-night, and strode back to the drawing-room.

Sir Gilbert's words were in Everard's mind as he drove through the wind and the rain. What had become of young Clare? Where and by whom had he been detained? Could any harm have befallen him? He did not believe much in the likelihood of his being at the vicarage all these hours; nevertheless, he would drive round there,

although it would be more than a couple of miles out of his way, and should Clare chance to be there, he would give him a hint that the sooner he got back to the Chase the better it might be for him.

But the missing delinquent was not at the vicarage. He had left there at his usual hour, and of his after-movements neither Mr. nor Mrs. Merton had any knowledge. "What if he has found his way to the King's Head, and is still there?" said Everard to himself as the vicarage door was shut behind him. "In any case, it's a point worth settling;" and with that he turned his horse's head in the direction of Mapleford. Rumours of Luigi's frequent visits to the billiard-room of the hotel in question had come to Lisle's ears, for Mr. Lewis Clare, in virtue of his position as Sir Gilbert's grandson, was a personage of some consequence in the little town, and his comings and goings were not merely noted, but freely commented upon.

Everard's surmise proved to be correct. He found Luigi at the King's Head, but not in quite as sober a condition as he might have been. It was the birthday of Miss Jennings, the pretty barmaid, and it had seemed to him that the occasion was one which nothing less than champagne could do justice to. There were several other young men there who were of the same opinion as Mr. Clare—so long as the latter was willing to pay for the wine. The sudden apparition of Lisle turned Luigi cold from head to foot and had the effect of partially sobering him. He did not doubt for a moment that Sir Gilbert had sent for him, and his limbs shook under him as, without a word of farewell to his companions, he rose in obedience to Lisle's beckoning finger and followed him into the open air. "Your grandfather is sitting up for you," said Everard. "The longer you stay here, the longer you will keep him out of bed. Let me help you into the dogcart."

"I dare not face him," whimpered Luigi. "I'd almost sooner go and drown myself."

"But you can't stay here all night," urged Lisle. "You have been here far too long already, and I shall not go without taking you with me."

"He'll turn me out neck and crop, I know he will," moaned the other, with a clutch at Lisle's sleeve to enable him to keep his balance.

"Pooh! Don't be a coward. Sir Gilbert's bark, as you ought to know by this time, is far worse than his bite. He will give you a good jacketing, and serve you right, and there will be an end of it."

"Ah!—you don't know him; you think you do, but you don't," said Luigi with the intense gravity of semi-inebriety. "Yes, I'd almost sooner drown myself than face him," he whimpered for the second time.

He was indeed, as Everard could not help reflecting, in no condition to be seen by his grandfather. What was the best thing to do? He stood for a moment or two considering, and then he said: "If you like to stay at my place to-night, I will find you a bed. But in that case, after leaving you there, I must drive to the Chase, inform

Sir Gilbert where you are, and make the best excuse I can for your non-appearance."

"Lisle, you're a brick!" ejaculated Luigi, seizing Everard by both arms and making as though he would playfully shake him. "I've never liked you, you know, but to-night you've proved a regular brick. —Yes, that's the card—a shake-down at your place, and you to go and make my excuses to Granddad. Of course you'll know what to say. Suddenly taken ill on my road home—glad to take refuge anywhere—awfully sorry he's been put about—better already and hope to be all right by morning.—You know."

A sharp drive of twenty minutes brought them to Elm Lodge, Mr. Kinaby's house, where, by this time, everybody had retired for the night, for which Everard was not sorry. He let himself and his companion in by means of his latch-key. His intention had been to give up his bed to Luigi, but this the latter would by no means agree to, not through any unselfishness on his part, but because he felt that the trouble of undressing would be too much for him. "All I want and all I'll have is a snooze on a sofa," was his own way of putting it. Accordingly, Everard having provided him with a blanket and pillow, he kicked off his boots and stretched himself out on the couch in the sitting-room. Half a minute later he was fast asleep.

Everard, having turned down the lamp, left him. The dog-cart was waiting at the door, and ten minutes later he drew up at the main entrance to the park. Nixon, the lodge-keeper, was in bed and had to be knocked up. Leaving his horse and trap in the old man's charge, Lisle took a bee-line across the park in the direction of the house. On reaching the terrace he saw that the entire frontage was in darkness, except that the couple of lozenge-shaped openings, high up in the shutters of the study windows showed like two dim patches of yellow light. It was evident that the baronet was keeping his word and had not yet retired.

Going up to one of the windows, Lisle took a coin out of his pocket and tapped with it on the glass. For a man of his years, Sir Gilbert's hearing was still remarkably acute, and in less than a minute the shutter was unbolted and thrown back, and in his deepest tones came the question: "Who is there?" It was almost on such a night, some quarter of a century before, that Alec Clare had tapped at the same window, and he, Sir Gilbert, had put to him precisely the same question that he was putting now. He shivered as the fact recalled itself to his mind. A chill breath from the tomb seemed for a moment to lift his silvered locks.

"It is I—Everard Lisle," came the clear response.

With fingers that trembled somewhat, Sir Gilbert undid the window-fastenings, and Lisle stepped into the room.

"You have brought me tidings of Lewis?" was the old man's eager query.

"I have, Sir Gilbert. He is at my rooms at Elm Lodge. He is

not at all well, and I have persuaded him to stay where he is till morning, in the hope that by then he will have thoroughly recovered."

Sir Gilbert drew himself up to his full height and grasped the young man by one shoulder. "Lisle—um—um, you are trying to keep something from me," he said. "There is something in the background which you do not wish me to know. If it concerns my grandson, I *must* know it, and I look to you to answer my questions with that candour which up to now I have found to be one of your unfailing attributes. Tell me this: did you find my grandson at Elm Lodge on your arrival there after leaving here?"

"No, sir, I did not."

"Where did you find him?"

"I went in search of him and found him at a certain hotel in the town."

"So—so. And the worse for drink, hey?"

"He certainly had imbibed a little more wine than was good for him."

"I thought as much," was Sir Gilbert's stern rejoinder.

"This, perhaps, may be urged in extenuation, sir—that the occasion was a birthday-party—(Mr. Lewis was one among a lot more young men)—that he had had nothing to eat since breakfast, and that the very fact of his being unaccustomed to take much wine was the reason why what he had taken affected him as it did."

"You would make excuses for him, would you? Leave him to do that for himself, if you please. And what is the class of young men whom he chooses for his associates? Nothing better than common riff-raff, I'll be bound." Then all at once his voice broke. "And it is of my grandson—the last of the Clares—that these things are being said!"

Everard hardly knew whether to go or stay. A minute later, Sir Gilbert was himself again. "I am much obliged to you, Lisle," he said, "for the trouble you have taken in this wretched affair. Tell my grandson to come to me in the library at ten o'clock to-morrow. Till then I have no wish to set eyes on him."

When Everard got back to his rooms he found Luigi still sleeping soundly, and so left him for the night. But it was certainly a surprise to him when, on going down next morning between seven and eight o'clock, he found the room empty and his guest gone.

Shortly after daybreak Luigi had woke up with a splitting headache. As soon as he had pulled his wits together and called to mind where he was, he proceeded to empty the carafe of water which Lisle had considerably placed within his reach. Then he sat for a long time with his elbows on his knees and his face buried in his hands. His heart sank within him when he thought of the inevitable interview with his grandfather which could not much longer be delayed, for he had strong doubts as to the amount of credence Sir Gilbert would

accord to the story of his sudden illness. That he would be subjected to a severe wiggling and have certain penalties of a more or less disagreeable kind imposed on him, he did not doubt; but he anticipated nothing worse than that. He had, however, another cause for disquietude which, as it seemed to him, might not improbably entail results far more dire. He was nearly sure that, in the course of the previous evening, he had made Miss Jennings an offer of his hand and heart, but whether she had accepted or repulsed him, or had merely treated his offer as a foolish joke, he could not for the life of him remember. But what if she had taken his offer seriously and, in the event of his repudiating it, which he would be absolutely bound to do, were to seek out his grandfather and pour her story into his ears! The consequences of her doing so were too terrifying to contemplate. "Oh, what an idiot I must have been!" he groaned more than once.

Somehow this morning he did not care to face Lisle; so, after a time he let himself out of the house and bent his steps towards the town. He entered the first hairdresser's shop he came to, where he had what is termed a "wash and brush-up," after which he felt considerably refreshed. Next to a chemist's where he called for and drank off at a draught a certain effervescing mixture which was warranted as an infallible "pick-me-up." After that he thought he would take a turn by the river and try to find an appetite for breakfast. Very careful was he not to go near the King's Head and Miss Jennings.

By this it was past nine o'clock and time for him to turn his face homeward. He had scarcely gone a dozen yards from the inn when he saw Mr. Kinaby's groom, whom he knew by sight, coming towards him on horseback. On nearing him the man reined up and carrying a finger to his forehead, said: "I've bin lookin' for you all over the town, sir. I've a note for you from Mr. Lisle."

Luigi took the note and tore it open. It was merely a line. "Your grandfather wants to see you in the library at ten o'clock.—E. L."

"All right," said Luigi with a nod to the man. "Tell Mr. Lisle it shall be attended to."

CHAPTER XXXII.

SIR GILBERT'S DECISION.

LUIGI, as he turned the handle of the library door, felt that he would have given something to know what had passed between Lisle and his grandfather over-night. Had the former succeeded in convincing Sir Gilbert that his absence from home was due to a sudden attack of illness, or had he allowed his grandfather to become acquainted with the real facts of the case? His uncertainty on the point was dispelled by Sir Gilbert's first words.

"So, sir, you have recovered sufficiently from your last night's debauch to allow of your coming to see me," he said, taking him in through his contracted lids from head to foot.

Luigi's eyes fell and his knees trembled under him. As he said of himself afterwards, he felt "like a washed-out scarecrow." He tried to moisten his lips, but his tongue was as dry as they. His first thought was: "That scoundrel, Lisle, *did* sell me, after all! Not a bit of use now pretending I was ill."

Clearing his voice, he said: "I am very sorry, sir, that I was not able to get home yesterday in time for dinner. That I took more wine than was good for me I frankly admit. So little am I used to it that a very small quantity tells upon me. I don't know whether you are aware of it, sir, but the occasion was a birthday wine party to drink the health of young Jack Derrick."

"Jack whom did you say?" demanded Sir Gilbert, adding, *sotto voce*: "If the fellow would only stand up and face me like a man and not look so confoundedly cringing and obsequious, I could forgive him almost anything."

"Jack Derrick, sir, son of Colonel Derrick, he who has lately come to reside at Stanbrooke Grange."

Luigi had calculated that his lie was a tolerably safe one. He knew that the Colonel and Sir Gilbert had never met and that, in view of the secluded habits of the latter, there was little likelihood of their doing so. Besides, it was quite true that young Derrick, with whom, however, he was merely on nodding terms, had just come of age, but the rest of his statement was a pure invention. It was the health of Miss Jennings that had been drunk in creaming bumpers.

"Humph!" said Sir Gilbert, as he gave a tug at the lobe of his right ear. Then he took a turn across the room and back again, for he had been standing by the chimney-piece on Luigi's entry. "After all, then," he remarked to himself, "the boy was in better company than I gave him credit for. Still, he deserves a sound wiggling and he shall have it." But his frown had lightened perceptibly, a fact which Luigi's furtively glancing eyes did not fail to note.

"Even granting what you say, sir, that is no excuse for allowing yourself to become inebriated as, by your own admission, you were last evening. Be careful not to let it happen again, or you will find that I shall deal with it much more severely. But I have not done with you yet. I have been very much grieved and annoyed to find that on two or three afternoons a week you have taken to frequenting a certain billiard-saloon in the town, and there consorting with a number of young men whose society can be neither creditable nor beneficial to you in any way. I am willing to believe that, in some measure, you have erred through ignorance, through lack of a clear conception of what is due to your position as my grandson. Still, even that excuse can scarcely avail you in the case of Snell, the groom, whom I discharged a few days ago. That you should steal out of the

house when you were supposed to be abed and go to the fellow's room and there sit smoking and drinking with him, making him thereby your equal for the time being, seems to me nothing less than disgraceful; indeed, I can scarcely trust myself to say what I think of it. After this warning, however, there will be no excuse for you—none whatever, if you do not keep strictly within the lines of conduct laid down for you. Snell has gone; and as regards the billiard-room, I must ask you to give me your word not to enter it again, nor, indeed, any other, without having obtained my sanction beforehand. Are you prepared to give me the promise I ask?”

“Certainly, sir—most fully and willingly. I give you my word to have no more to do with public billiards after to-day, and I shall be very careful about the class of people I mix with in time to come.” Nothing came easier to Luigi than to make promises; the difficulty with him, as with so many of us, lay in the keeping of them. “This is another specimen of Lisle’s dirty work,” he reflected. “He’s been playing the double part of spy and informer. But a day of reckoning will come for him.”

“Keep to your promise and you will find yourself no loser by it in the long run,” resumed Sir Gilbert. “And now you may go for the present,” he said after a minute or two. “But I cannot conceal that I am grievously disappointed in you.”

Luigi needed no second bidding. He had “pulled through” the scrape far better than he had expected, and was now inclined to be jubilant. “Grievously disappointed in me, is he?” he said with a short laugh. “What did the old fool expect? A grandson made to pattern, I suppose. Well, Granddad will just have to put up with me and make the best of me as I am.”

After a few minutes spent in half-bitter, half-sorrowful rumination, Sir Gilbert said aloud: “I’ll go and have a talk with Louisa. She’s very clear-headed for one of her sex, and her opinions are nearly always worth listening to.”

He found Lady Pell in the morning-room, busy with her crewel work and alone. She had sent Ethel for that after-breakfast ramble which she believed to be so conducive to the girl’s health and good looks. Sir Gilbert sat down and proceeded to give her an account of his interview with Luigi. “What to do with him, I know not,” he ended by saying. “I am sadly afraid that he will never be a credit to the house of Clare. He seems to have contracted a number of low tastes and reprehensible habits before he and I had ever set eyes on each other, and whether I shall ever succeed in eradicating them seems more than doubtful. It is a sad thing to say, but there are times when I feel almost driven to wish that I had remained ignorant of his existence and he of mine.”

“My dear Gilbert, you really should not allow such notions to get into your head. Things are not yet come to that pass between you and your grandson. There are many excuses to be made for the

poor young man, and remembering that, you ought to regard his shortcomings with the utmost leniency."

"That is what I try to do, Louisa. It is a bitter reflection, but one which often haunts me, that if I had treated this boy's father less hardly, my old age might have been a very different one from what it is to-day."

"You have translated Lewis to an altogether different kind of life from that which he has been used to, and allowances must be made for the fact. Patience and tact will often effect wonders. I would not be in too great a hurry, if I were you. Old habits and ways can't be got rid of in a hurry. If you believe the young man himself is doing his best to second your efforts, why then——"

"But that is just where I'm in doubt."

"Then give him the benefit of the doubt; it will only be generous on your part to do so. I think, if I were you, I would let him travel awhile. Nothing tends more to expand a person's mind—providing," she drily added, "that one has a mind capable of expansion, and in Lewis's case the converse has yet to be proved."

After luncheon he had a further talk with Lady Pell, one result of which was that he asked Luigi for the address of Captain Verinder, and having obtained it, he proceeded to write to that gentleman, asking him, if it would be convenient for him to do so, to call upon the writer between eleven and twelve o'clock on the day but one following. As has already been stated, Sir Gilbert had conceived a distaste for the Captain at their first interview, and he had afterwards been at the pains to snub him most unmercifully. Had he been questioned as to the cause of his dislike, he could only have replied, that it was one of those unreasoning and unreasonable antipathies which nobody cares to formulate in words, even if it were not next to impossible to do so. In point of fact, it was merely an instance the more of "I do not love thee, Doctor Fell."

Now, however, that he had decided to carry out Lady Pell's suggestion, and send Luigi abroad for a time, it seemed to him that the boy's uncle, provided he were willing to undertake the charge, was the proper person into whose hands to entrust him while away from home. He knew nothing whatever to the Captain's detriment, and he told himself that, as a man of sense, he ought not to allow a foolish prejudice to stand in the way of any project which was likely to prove in the slightest degree beneficial to his grandson. Hence his note to the Captain.

It was not without sundry misgivings and in a far from comfortable frame of mind, that next day Captain Verinder journeyed down to Mapleford. A cab conveyed him from the station to the Chase, where he discharged the vehicle, not knowing whether he might be detained half-an-hour, or half-a-day. In any case, a walk back to the station would do him no harm.

He had evidently been expected, and was at once shown into the

room which was already so familiar to him, where he was presently joined by Sir Gilbert, who, for the first time, welcomed him with an outstretched hand.

Augustus Verinder breathed a deep inward sigh of relief.

It is not needful to describe in detail the interview that followed. Sir Gilbert at once entered frankly into the affair, explaining to the Captain exactly why he had sent for him and the task which he was desirous that the latter should undertake. September was still young, and another month of fine weather might almost be depended upon. It was his wish that his grandson should spend that month in foreign travel, chiefly in Switzerland, with, perhaps, a glance at the Italian lakes *en passant*. Would it fall in with Captain Verinder's arrangements to fill the part of Mentor to this latter-day Telemachus during the tour in question? To which the Captain replied, that nothing would afford him greater happiness; and, indeed, his heart leapt for joy at the thought of being able to spend a month on the Continent without being called upon to disburse a shilling of his own.

Various matters having been discussed and settled, Sir Gilbert produced his cheque-book, and after having filled up and signed one of the forms, handed it to the Captain. A glance at it showed the latter that it represented a sum of one hundred and seventy pounds.

"For your expenses," said Sir Gilbert; "but I have included in it twenty pounds for Lewis's outfit, which, seeing that he will be but a month away, ought, I think, to be sufficient."

"Amply sufficient, Sir Gilbert," assented the Captain as he pocketed the cheque.

"I should like Lewis to drop me a line every four or five days, so as to keep me *au courant* with your movements. I am desirous that you should avoid all large towns, such as Paris and Brussels, either in going or returning. It will be best that you should make your way to Bâle as speedily as possible and decide on your future course after you reach there."

"Your wishes are my commands, Sir Gilbert."

"How soon will it be convenient for you to start?"

"In thirty-six hours from now I shall be at your disposal."

"Trust you old soldiers for knowing the value of time. And now that we have settled everything so far, you must oblige me by staying to luncheon," said Sir Gilbert with a heartiness that was more assumed than real. Do what he would, he could not like this man. And yet he had nothing valid, nothing tangible to urge against him. "I am a prejudiced old fool," he said to himself, "and the older I get the worse I become."

At luncheon the Captain was fortunate enough to give Lady Pell a distinctly favourable impression of himself, which went to prove that Lady Pell's professed ability to read character at first sight was sometimes at fault. "I agree with you that the man is not *quite* a gentleman," she remarked later to Sir Gilbert; "but in that respect

he only resembles the great majority of his sex. In these matters, my dear cousin, one can't pick and choose. It seems to me that Captain Verinder, as the boy's uncle, is the proper person to entrust him to."

Next morning after breakfast, Luigi said to Lady Pell when no one was by: "Can you spare me five minutes in private, Lady Pell?"

"Certainly, my dear boy," was the cordial response. "Come with me to my sitting-room." There was much about Luigi that she did not like, but it seemed to her that in some respects he was deserving of pity.

"And now——?" she said, looking questioningly at him as she took her usual chair by the window and motioned him to another. The room, which had been specially assigned her, had been the late Lady Clare's boudoir.

Luigi cleared his voice and then, a whimsical smile overspreading his features, said: "Lady Pell, last night I saw the Grey Brother."

Lady Pell pricked up her ears and became at once interested. "Gracious me!" she exclaimed. "You do indeed surprise me. When and where did it happen? You must give me all particulars."

"It was late—between eleven and twelve o'clock—I had stolen out of the house by way of the conservatory on purpose to have a smoke." Here Lady Pell shook a monitory finger at him. "The fact is, I've never been used to the early hours of the Chase, and I can't sleep if I go to bed before midnight. Well, having let myself out, I made my way to the little wood, or spinny, which reaches from the back premises of the Chase nearly as far as the old tower where Martin Rigg, the former keeper, and his daughter have their quarters. It was not the first time I had gone there for a smoke after dark. In the middle of it is a tiny glade, or open space, and there I seated myself on the twisted root of a tree. A young moon was half way up the sky, and the stars were very bright. I had smoked one pipe out and thought I would have another before turning in, but on feeling for my tobacco-pouch, which I had laid down beside me, I could not find it. Slipping off my seat, I stooped to search for it among the grass, found it and stood up again. On turning to resume my seat I found myself confronted by a tall robed and cowed figure, which might have sprung out of the ground for anything I could have told to the contrary. Certainly I had heard no faintest sound of footsteps. That I was considerably flabbergasted, your ladyship will readily believe."

"Such an apparition would be enough to flabbergast anybody, as you term it. But what was it like as regards its features?"

"Its face was nearly hidden by its cowl, and all I can call to mind is that it had a long grizzled beard and two eyes that seemed to look through me."

"Well, and what did you do next?"

"I simply bolted—and I'm not ashamed to confess it."

"Oh!" was her ladyship's sole comment, but to herself she said: "You coward!"

"You won't catch me going there again after dark."

"I suppose not after such a startling experience. But tell me this: did the apparition, if such I may term it, project any shadow of itself in the moonlight?"

Luigi opened his eyes. "Upon my word, I don't know, Lady Pell. I was too confused to notice. But why do you ask?"

"Because I believe it is an understood thing that ghosts have no shadows—what, indeed, are they themselves but shadows? You evidently missed an interesting point there. But why have you chosen to make me your confidant, Lewis?"

"Because after what you said to me the other night when that girl made such a bobbery on the terrace, I thought I would ask your advice before saying a word to anybody else."

"That was very sensible on your part. My advice is, that you keep your singular experience strictly to yourself. The whole affair is inexplicable, and no good can come of talking about it. Your grandfather would be greatly annoyed were he to discover that any such report had emanated from you."

Luigi could scarcely credit his good fortune. That he should not merely be done with Latin declensions and those hateful riding-lessons, but be at liberty to ramble about the Continent for the ensuing month, visiting places he had never seen before, seemed almost too delightful to be true. He could not help saying to himself with a chuckle: "Perhaps if I hadn't drunk Miss J.'s health quite so often the other night, this bit of luck would never have happened to me." It was a relief to him on another account to get away from Mapleford for a time. It would effectually separate him from the aforesaid Miss J., who would be sure to hear of his departure. He trusted that by the time he should return she would have forgotten all about that ridiculous question he had put to her on a certain occasion, her answer to which had quite escaped his memory.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

LUIGI had telegraphed to his uncle by which train he should travel, and the Captain met him at the terminus. Sir Gilbert's cheque had already been cashed, and uncle and nephew now proceeded to lay in a small but sufficient supply of travelling necessities. After that they dined at a French restaurant and finished up the evening at a music-hall.

Next day they crossed to Antwerp, from which place Luigi wrote a few lines to Sir Gilbert from a rough draft furnished him by the Captain.

"My dear Grandfather,—We reached here from Harwich early this morning. We are staying over till to-morrow at my wish, there being many objects of interest in this memorable old city which I have long been desirous of seeing. This forenoon we visited the cathedral and two of the more celebrated churches, in each of which we found much to interest us. The afternoon was devoted to the so-called museum, where is a celebrated collection of paintings, including several by Rubens and other well-known masters of the Dutch school. I need scarcely say that we were highly gratified.

"We start by an early train to-morrow for Bâle, which we purpose making our head-quarters. We shall, however, if we find the trains convenient, break our journey for a couple of hours at Cologne in order to visit the Dom, which I feel sure you would not like me to miss seeing."

Within an hour of posting the foregoing letter uncle and nephew were on their way to Brussels, although it was one of the two places specified by Sir Gilbert which he was desirous that his grandson should not visit.

It was not the first time the Captain had been there, and of such an agreeable kind were the recollections he retained of it that he had felt irresistibly tempted to visit it again. The fact was that on the occasion of his previous visit he had left the city richer by twenty-five pounds than he had entered it, that being the amount of his winnings after a couple of nights at the gaming-table. Trifling though such a sum might seem to many people, to the impecunious Captain it represented a very substantial and satisfactory gain. Thus it was scarcely to be wondered at, now he found himself in the neighbourhood and in the possession of ample funds, that a great longing should come over him to tempt fortune in the same way again. He would only risk a small sum, so that if he should prove so unfortunate as to lose it, no great harm would be done, while, if he should be lucky enough to double or treble it, his winnings would help to clear off some of his more pressing liabilities when he should get back to town. It was unfortunate that he was not in a position to prosecute his little adventure alone, but where he went Luigi must of necessity go too—not, as he presently found when he broached the subject, that his nephew needed more than a hint to cause him to exhibit an almost absurd amount of eagerness to follow his worthy relative's example.

Thus it came to pass that about nine o'clock that same evening uncle and nephew, without any further introduction than a few whispered words between the Captain and the man on guard at the door, were at once admitted to the self-styled club or *cercle* (which, in reality, differed scarcely, if at all, from a common gambling haunt), of which the Captain retained such pleasing recollections. It had been agreed that on no account should they risk more than

twenty-five pounds between them, out of which the Captain, as being the more experienced of the two, took fifteen for his share, leaving Luigi the remaining ten.

Soon after midnight the Captain perforce stopped playing for lack of funds. His fifteen pounds had vanished to the last franc; but, on the other hand, singular to relate in view of his inexperience, Luigi rose from the table a winner to the extent of fourteen pounds. Captain Verinder at once decided that next morning should see them *en route* for Bâle.

But it was not to be. While taking an after-breakfast stroll—he had decided not to start till the midday train—the Captain encountered a man who, a few years before, had been one of his most intimate friends. This person, Tyars by name, was now settled in Brussels and in a good position, and nothing would satisfy him but that Verinder and his nephew must dine and spend the evening at his house, an arrangement to which, after a little demur, the Captain agreed.

As it fell out, however, he was compelled to go alone, Luigi, in the course of the afternoon, being seized with one of the violent sick headaches to which he had been subject at times ever since he could remember. His uncle left him prostrate on a couch in a darkened room.

But for once the usually astute and suspicious Captain had been thoroughly hoodwinked. Scarcely had he disappeared before Luigi sat up, chuckling softly to himself. He was bent on a little adventure of his own in which his uncle should have neither part nor parcel. The demon of gambling had got him in his grip, and Luigi lent a willing ear to his enticements. He had won fourteen pounds last night, why should he not win forty, eighty, a hundred to-night? He could see no reason whatever why he should not.

In the big solid-leather portmanteau which held both his uncle's clothes and his own was stored away a little roll of bank-notes of the value of one hundred pounds, the same being part of the proceeds of Sir Gilbert's cheque. Luigi's intention was to abstract a couple or three five-pound notes and with them, in addition to his overnight winnings, to try his luck at the *cercle* for the second time. He had opened the portmanteau and the roll of notes was in his fingers, when he was startled by the sound of voices, one of which he took to be his uncle's, in the corridor outside. In an instant he had shut down the lid of the portmanteau and crammed the notes into his pocket. The alarm proved to be a false one, but Luigi, having taken possession of the whole of the notes, saw no reason why he should put any of them back. After all, they were his property and not his uncle's; besides, although he might take them with him to the *cercle*, he was fully determined not to risk more than the sum he had originally fixed on: it was a determination from which nothing should move him. How his uncle would open his eyes in the morning at beholding his nephew's overnight winnings scattered carelessly on the dressing-table!

Captain Verinder opened his eyes very wide indeed when, on entering his nephew's room some time after midnight, he found Luigi pacing it, wild-eyed, haggard, with clenched hands, tumbled hair and rumpled clothes, like a man half distraught. He had come back from the gaming table penniless. In the excitement of play, all his fine resolutions had vanished like chaff before the wind. He had gone on losing madly, recklessly, till not only had the hundred pounds gone, but his previous night's winnings and whatever else he had had in his purse to boot. Well might the Captain when, bit by bit, the truth had been dragged out, sit down and stare at him in blank dismay. No words at his command could have expressed more than a tithe of what he felt.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A DESPERATE RESOLVE

It was nine o'clock next morning. Captain Verinder, with his hands clasped behind his back and downcast eyes, was pacing the courtyard of the hotel, which was ornamented with a double row of orange-trees and myrtles in green tubs, and had one end roofed with trellis work festooned with a vine, the leaves of which were now turning brown and golden, and under which were ranged a number of rustic seats interspersed with small marble-topped tables. Presently Luigi, for whom his uncle had been waiting, made his appearance, looking very sallow and cadaverous, while the dark half-circles under his eyes bore mute witness to the sort of night he had spent.

"Don't be afraid that I am about to reproach you for your insensate folly," began his uncle. "Your conscience will do that far more effectually than any words of mine. Besides, I hold myself greatly to blame for bringing you here in the first instance, and it is perhaps no more than just that I should have to put up with the consequences equally with yourself. I have been going into cash matters this morning and find that when our hotel bill has been discharged, we shall have about fifteen pounds left, all told. Now, if you can reveal to me by what miracle of economy two people can contrive to spend a month in Switzerland without exceeding that amount, I shall be much obliged to you."

"Of course it can't be done," said Luigi sulkily. "There's nothing for it but to go back home."

"Oh, indeed. And in that case how, pray, shall we excuse ourselves to Sir Gilbert Clare?"

"Why need he know that we have returned? Why can't we lie quietly by in London till the month has come to an end?"

"For a very simple reason," returned the Captain drily. "Have you forgotten that your grandfather looks to receive a letter from you every few days while you are away? Now, supposing you were to

send him a note professedly written from Lausanne, or Geneva, with merely the London postmark on it, what would happen then?"

"I had forgotten all about having to write to the old boy," said Luigi with a smothered imprecation.

"On the other hand," resumed the Captain, "it would be madness to go to him and frankly confess our sins. He would never forgive either of us, and he would regard me, perhaps rightly, as being by far the bigger sinner of the two."

"In that case, what's the best thing to do?"

"Upon my word, I haven't the ghost of an idea. It's a bad look-out all round. Nowhere can I discern a way out of our quandary. But let's to breakfast with what appetite we may. A hungry stomach is never a good counsellor."

It seemed as if the Captain was destined to encounter people whom he knew. As he was crossing the entrance-hall after breakfast he met a man face to face whom he had not seen for some time. He was Mr. Henriques, the money-lender, who, in days gone by, when Verinder was going gaily down hill but had not yet reached the bottom, had more than once helped him to tide over a temporary difficulty. Both the men now came to a halt and each asked the other what had brought him there. The money-lender was not one of those who have no eyes for a man because he happens to have come down in the world; such men have their uses, as no one knew better than he. More than once since his own collapse Verinder had been enabled to introduce "business" to him, and had not been above accepting a commission for doing so.

"Can you spare me ten minutes?" queried the Captain.

"Willingly, if you'll wait till I've breakfasted," replied the other. "I'll join you on the smoking-room balcony in half an hour."

The Captain and Luigi were just in time to catch the mid-day train. They both looked jubilant, and well they might, for Mr. Henriques had come to their rescue. The Captain had introduced Luigi to him and had frankly explained how they came to be "cornered." (He had always found it advisable to deal frankly with Mr. Henriques.) When the money-lender had satisfied himself, which a few leading questions enabled him to do, that Luigi was really the grandson of Sir Gilbert Clare of Withington Chase, he made no difficulty about advancing him a hundred pounds on the joint note of hand of himself and his uncle. For the time being they were saved, and just then they did not permit any thought of the future to mar their content.

It does not come within the scope of our design to accompany them in their wanderings from place to place. It will be enough to say that they made good use of their time and spent their money with a free hand. Indeed, it was owing to the latter circumstances that they found themselves back in London some days before they were due

there, paucity of funds having compelled them to cut short their tour, a fact which they deemed it advisable to keep from the knowledge of Sir Gilbert. Accordingly it was arranged that Luigi should quarter himself for a few days on his uncle, and that the two should then travel down to the Chase as if they had just come straight through from the Continent.

But on reaching the Captain's rooms a very disagreeable surprise awaited them. Mr. Henriques was dead, and the executors on whom devolved the winding up of his affairs wrote, not merely to acquaint Captain Verinder with that melancholy fact, but also to give him notice that the bill at thirty days (the late Mr. H. had declined to have it drawn for a longer period, but had hinted that a renewal might perhaps be arranged) for one hundred and twenty pounds, principal and interest, bearing the joint signatures of himself and Mr. Lewis Clare, would have to be met in due course, and that, under the circumstances, any renewal of it was out of the question.

Never were two men more dumfounded. They had eaten their cake and enjoyed it, and now the reckoning must be paid. They were no better off than they had been at Brussels; indeed, they were worse off to the extent of twenty pounds, and, now as then, their predicament was such that, of all people in the world, Sir Gilbert was the last whose ears it must be allowed to reach. It was indeed a sorry home-coming.

In the course of the following day Captain Verinder waited upon the executors, but the only concession he could obtain from them was a week's grace beyond the date when the note would fall due.

"London swarms with money-lenders," said Luigi; "surely, one or other of them would do as Henriques did, and advance us enough money on our joint signatures to pay off this confounded bill."

"Very possibly that might be managed; but what then? We should merely be putting off the evil day for a little while, and the worst of it would be that the longer we succeeded in staving it off, the bigger would be the reckoning when it did come. At present all we have to find is a hundred and twenty pounds, but if we should succeed in negotiating another bill, at the end of two or three months we should have a hundred and fifty to meet, and supposing we were compelled to go on renewing, a little later we should have to face a liability of a couple of hundred pounds; and so it would go up by leaps and bounds in the way of compound interest till some day our good friends the usurers would put the screw on, and the inevitable crash would come. No; we must, if possible, find some better way out of our difficulty than that. I'll sleep on it; perhaps an idea may come to me in the course of the night."

Next morning the Captain seemed in a thoughtful mood, and as Luigi was in no humour for talking, breakfast passed almost in silence. When it had come to an end, and the equipage had been removed,

the elder man said: "Draw up that easy chair to the window, and light a weed. I have something to say to you."

As soon as his own meerschaum and Luigi's cigar were well under way, he resumed: "You remember that day about which you spoke to me while we were abroad, when, Mr. Everard Lisle being away on business for your grandfather, the old gentleman called you into his study and got you to write one or two letters for him?"

Luigi nodded.

"Then, you will remember telling me that while you were there a clerk came down from London, bringing with him a parcel of American bonds, for which your grandfather, after having examined and counted them, gave the man a receipt, and that, as soon as the clerk had gone, he asked you to unlock the door of the strong room which opens out of his study, and deposit the bonds in question in a certain drawer marked B. You also said, if I mistake not, that that was the first time you had set foot inside the strong room."

"And the last," interposed Luigi.

"If I recollect rightly, the bonds in question were endorsed 'Missouri and Eastern Union Preference.'"

"That is so."

"That they are a good sound stock may be taken for granted, otherwise your grandfather would not have invested so largely in them. I see by this morning's newspaper that yesterday they were quoted at from 53 to 53 $\frac{5}{8}$."

"Yes—what then?" demanded Luigi blankly. He could not imagine what his uncle was driving at.

"Merely this, dear boy—that if we could by any means contrive to annex a few of the bonds in question, a way out of our difficulty would at once be opened for us."

The silence that ensued lasted for some minutes. The Captain wanted what he had said to sink into his nephew's mind. It was a daring suggestion, but, after all, not nearly so audacious as that other suggestion, which had emanated from the same source, that Luigi should personate Sir Gilbert Clare's dead grandson. That suggestion had borne practical fruit, had, in fact, developed into a splendid success. Why should not this one prove equally as successful?

"A very ingenious suggestion indeed, uncle," said Luigi at length; "but how do you propose to carry it into effect? You talk as if I had in my possession a duplicate key of the strong room."

"That is a mere detail," responded the Captain airily, "which I have not yet had time to consider."

"Assuming for the moment that we succeed in obtaining possession of the bonds, and that their loss is discovered, what then?"

"Yes, what then? Why should suspicion fall upon you? Should we decide to carry out the affair, it would have to be in such a way as to leave no possible link which would serve to connect you or me with

the missing documents. Besides, I think it not unlikely that some long time would elapse before the bonds would be missed. Your grandfather has apparently bought the stock as a permanent investment, and if such be the case, no reason will exist for him to go through the parcel a second time in order to satisfy himself that none of them have been abstracted. Months, nay years, might elapse without the loss being discovered; it is even possible that Sir Gilbert might die in ignorance thereof. It would be singular, would it not, if the bonds should ultimately come to you as his heir? Looked at from that point of view, you would merely be obtaining an advance on your own property."

"Let us suppose once more," persisted Luigi. "The bonds are sold, let us say; their loss is discovered; as a consequence, a hue-and-cry is set afoot and the missing numbers advertised. In that case what is to prevent their being traced back to the first vendor of them after their—hem! abstraction?"

The Captain smiled as he shook the ash out of his meerschaum. "The answer to that is very simple," he said. "I shall know how to put the bonds on the market through such a channel as will render it an impossibility for them ever to be traced back."

Three days later uncle and nephew, attired in their travelling suits as if fresh from their journey across the Channel, arrived at Withington Chase. Captain Verinder felt it was due to Sir Gilbert that he should personally give him back the young Telemachus who for the past four weeks had been entrusted to his charge.

By this time he and Luigi had settled all the details of their plot, as far as it was possible for them to do so beforehand, and away from the spot.

(To be continued.)

SIR DAVID WILKIE, R.A.

JUST one hundred years ago, there was a great commotion on a Sunday evening in the rural parish of Cults, near St. Andrews.

The worthy minister's third son, the offspring of his third penniless wife, was a well-known pointing of the proverb, "Manse bairns are seldom menseful (discreet)," but on this occasion things had gone too far. It was bad enough that David was for ever spoiling the Bible margins with pencil sketches, but when it came to taking a rough portrait of his reverend father preaching, with soft charcoal, on the smooth bald head of a sleeping miller, something had to be done : and the lad got no supper that night, and much reproof.

Short commons was probably not uncommon in the minister's large family. Sixty-eight pounds a year to begin with, and a maximum of a hundred pounds will not go far in such cases, even in Scotland. So David went only to the parish school, and there he was considered but a very poor scholar.

His time was spent, at every available moment, in lying on the grass and copying every person and animal that came his way, or strolling off to the smithy to watch the effects of light and shade. He was a steady affectionate boy, however, although far from attractive in appearance then or ever. The neighbouring gentry began to take an interest, which increased with years, in the awkward, eager student. He was allowed to see the few pictures their houses contained ; and later on, after he had spent some time in Edinburgh, taking advantage of some free instructions in art then given to those too poor to pay for teaching, we find these early patrons sitting to him for their portraits, when he returned at nineteen to the Manse, having gained all the advantage he could in the capital.

His master in Edinburgh had as a preliminary refused to admit him as a student, pronouncing his test work utterly worthless. A private letter from Lord Leven was needed as an open sesame.

His early portraits are stiff, crude, and hard, but even then his grouping of any peasants whom he could cajole into models was admirable. When the home patrons failed, he moved on to other parishes ; getting a little encouragement here and there, but such very small payments that life was very difficult, and, like Morland, he had on at least one occasion to paint a sign to pay his bill. That sign was soon rescued, and is considered one of his best early specimens. It is a man watering a grey horse.

All this time he was working off and on at a canvas forty-four by twenty-five inches—the 'Pitlessie Fair.' The figures number one hundred and forty, and nearly all the faces are portraits, and the scene is a vivid and living scene from Fifeshire life. This picture

was purchased for the, to David, magnificent sum of twenty-five guineas. The youth was enchanted. Calling in all his small debts, and finding he was now altogether master of sixty pounds, he started for London to study under the Royal Academy, to the great alarm of his father, who predicted starvation and ruin, while David averred stoutly his money would last him for two years. It really lasted nine or ten months, and before it was all gone, his masters and fellow-students recognised there was stuff in this industrious, tall, lanky Scotch youth with his nerveless figure, his pale complexion, his sleek sandy hair, high cheek-bones, snubbish nose, and ill-drawn, retreating chin, his broad accent and rustic air, underneath which lay perdu always the canny prudence of his native land.

He had brought with him some letters of introduction, but they proved of no use except as an occasion for subsequent character pictures. He dined for a shilling a day, cleaned his own shoes, managed to sell a few sketches for small sums; but with all his efforts at economy his money failed. The poor old minister managed, Heaven alone knows how, to let him have ten pounds. He got twenty pounds into debt. With the ten pounds from home came the information that David's sister longed for a piano; could a very cheap one be found in London? It was only to try, and all the humblest music warehouses were searched.

In one the owner of the premises happened to hear the broad accent: his wife was Scotch; and on inquiring the possible customer's name, and learning it was the same as Mrs. Stodart, he was interested, got into talk with the youth, and invited him to tea at his house.

This was the turning-point of Wilkie's fortunes. Mrs. Stodart was delighted with some of the young man's work, and got him a few sitters, and better still, was the means of introducing him to wealthy patrons. Lord Mansfield saw a sketch of the 'Pitlessie Fair,' asked Wilkie to paint him a picture of it, and told him to name his own price. David named fifteen pounds. Before the canvas was covered, he could have sold it vastly better, and was tempted to do so. On consulting his father, however, the minister said a bargain was a bargain, and must be kept. Lord Mansfield gave him thirty pounds. This picture made his fame—that and the 'Village Politicians.'

At twenty-one Wilkie found himself in the forefront of his profession; but the long years of penury, hard work, and deep anxiety had greatly shattered his constitution. His kind friends and patrons did more than order fresh pictures; they induced him to execute them at their own homes; and the boy who only some months back had thought himself lucky to get a sitter for twenty shillings, now found himself an honoured guest in the noblest houses in the land. There was a rugged dignity beneath his rough exterior, and a sensible silence concealed his lack of general education for the most part, while many were unable to distinguish between his raw brogue and the accent of cultured Scotch gentle-folk.

One true and faithful friend did recognise his deficiencies. This was Sir George Beaumont, himself a perfect gentleman. He ever and anon dropped judicious hints, which Wilkie was sensible enough to follow, and for which he thanked the giver gratefully to his dying day. "The more you elevate your mind," said Sir George, "the more you will be likely to succeed." Wilkie sought his advice as to study, and the books he should read, and his letters show the rapid advance and stride of his spirit; 'Don Quixote' was one of the works advised, and used in the artist's idle or flagging moments for years. He worked now industriously at his many orders, and his 'Blind Fiddler' adorned the Academy of 1807. Though it was not, as his friends said, well hung, it proved one of the chief attractions of the season.

At this period the artist was but twenty-two. He was young in years, but old in the experience of his art; nevertheless still eager and anxious to learn and improve, and never ashamed to own if he was ignorant. He did not hesitate to stop a conversation if he could not clearly understand anything that was said.

About this time, having received commissions for forty pictures, he revisited his parents laden with honours and gifts which he had purchased for the good people at Cults. He calls the few weeks spent in the old home at this time the happiest period of his life. His visit over, he returned to better lodgings in town, and to a brighter life of which he kept a minute though rather prosy diary, with the exception of a few touches of which the following is one.

"26th.—A young lady called and made use of the name of one of my friends to see my pictures. She expressed in strong terms her regret at not finding any picture of mine in the exhibition, and said she had seen a print of me but it looked much too youthful. Though she said nothing at all improper, I am inclined to doubt her character as well as her motive for calling on me. It is altogether a strange matter."

There was but little romance in Wilkie's life. He was however once nearly in love, but had not the courage to do more than rapturously admire the fair one's matchless throat and head. He was a man of few words, even then at the height of his fame—of few words and great personal diffidence. His phrase was as follows in a dialogue given as more or less true.

Newton.—Well, we have had a pleasant evening, Wilkie.

Wilkie.—Raily.

N.—But you were very silent.

W.—Raily.

N.—In fact, you spoke but one word.

W.—Raily?

N.—There it goes again! Why, Dawvid, you never do say anything but *raily*—

W.—Raily!

In 1823 Wilkie was appointed Limner to the royal household of Scotland, with a salary of only about one hundred and fifty pounds per year, but then the honour was great and the compliment was graciously conferred.

At this time his father had been dead some twelve years, and during all that period his mother and sister had made their home with him in Philimore Gardens, Kensington, having brought with them from the manse "the old brass pan for making jelly, with an old lay figure and some china, together with the minister's MSS., and David's early drawings." Not long after this great flitting had been accomplished, Wilkie had his first interview, in 1813, with the Prince Regent, who was most gracious and expressed himself highly delighted with the picture, 'Blind Man's Buff,' which the artist had painted for him.

In 1824 Wilkie's tenderly-loved mother died. Two brothers also died that year. David had been security for one of them who had held a good appointment. On his death there was found a considerable deficit which had to be made good by the artist. We find him looking closely again at the shillings and pounds, and on the sale of a picture, making the remark that as nothing had been said about the frame, it was in a plain one, and would do to send it home in.

However a new and the most paying return of his art was then only just opening up—that of selling the right of engraving; and to this business Wilkie gave himself now with all his native shrewdness, and had it not been for the financial crises of 1825, must have done well. A period of great commercial loss set in; Wilkie suffered with the rest, and the fear of renewing his acquaintance with the grim penury of early life was too much for him. His nervous system broke down completely, and it became impossible for him to paint. There was a threatening of paralysis in his hands and feet, and a more serious touch of it to his brain. Having struggled in vain with the cloud upon him, he was at length forced to yield to his physician's advice, and try a complete rest coupled with foreign travel.

The king on hearing this, sent his private physician to the patient. "Go," he said; "Wilkie is proud and shy. He may not need money, or he may. Say to him that on your report, as I feel sure of his speedy recovery, he is to draw on me for any sum he needs, and later on he can repay me with his work."

Wilkie was deeply touched, but he did not need the offered money. He made his Limner salary and a little he had at hand serve his modest needs, and set forth on his travels. For two years he remained incapable of mental or manual application for more than ten or fifteen minutes at a time; his faculties were themselves untouched in essence, and his diary shows a constant improvement of style. He notes in it with great delight that on the death of the King of Bavaria the picture 'The Reading of the Will,' being private property, was sold by auction for twelve hundred pounds, three times what Wilkie had received for it.

Wilkie's art criticisms abroad are most interesting and instructive. He travelled for some time with Washington Irving, and went to a masked ball in his company disguised as a Turk, but made his salaams with his turban tucked under his arm, forgetting it was not an opera hat.

It was Spanish art which seems to have most influenced our artist, and not to his advantage, on his return to work. Once back in England, where William was now king, he had a multitude of portraits to paint as Court artist, and later on he executed his picture of our present Queen's first council at Kensington. Her Majesty was very kind to the artist whom she had personally known long since. Her own taste and talent enabled her the better to appreciate his genius and rejoice at his restoration to health. In 1840 we find him living in a handsome house, with an accumulated fortune of £30,000. He was now fifty-five, and on the eve of starting on a more extended tour than before—one to the Holy Land. He was a deeply religious man, and longed to explore that most interesting region and sketch from Nature designs for some sacred subjects.

"What guide book are you taking?" asked a friend.

"This—the best," he replied, drawing a Bible from his pocket.

He accomplished his tour satisfactorily, but on the return journey took fever, died at Gibraltar in his fifty-sixth year, and was committed to a watery grave in the bay on the 1st of June. A monument is erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey.

ALICE QUARRY.



A GREEK COURTSHIP.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

By F. M. F. SKENE.

A GARDEN, glowing with brilliant Eastern flowers and shaded by lofty palm trees, beneath the intense blue sky of Greece, could scarcely fail to do justice to the name by which it was called in the vernacular of the country—Angelo Kepos—The garden of the Angels. Whether it still exists in its pristine beauty, since modern progress has invaded the classic plains of Attica with railroads and tramways, we cannot affirm certainly, but that Paradisaical spot, as it was some years ago, rises before us even now in the soft light of a summer evening.

The heat of the day was over. In Athens, only a few miles distant, it had been overpowering; but here it was tempered by the gentle breeze that blew from the heights of Mount Pentelicus, and the disappearance of the burning sun was the signal for all to come forth and enjoy the cool balmy air of evening.

Into that lovely garden one of the inmates of the dwelling-house to which it belonged had already come with the springing step of light-hearted youth; a white-robed girl unmistakably English, with her red-brown hair and tall slender figure, but who nevertheless was talking in modern Greek with many endearing expressions to the companion by her side. This was a beautiful gazelle, looking up at her with passionate attachment in its great dark eyes, and compelling its small swift feet to keep pace with her steps along the flower-scented paths.

Presently, as was her wont on these cool evenings, she prepared for a game of hide-and-seek with the lovely little deer. Laying her hand for a moment over its eyes, she darted quickly behind a bush, and fled down a shaded path out of its sight.

Then began the charming sport which she knew would follow. The gazelle, panting to rejoin its beloved mistress, rushed with wonderful speed in all directions, every now and then leaping high into the air that he might see over the intervening branches, and detect the white form hiding among the trees. To see the fleet graceful animal thus bounding along in his anxious search was the prettiest sight imaginable; and so a magnificent looking Greek seemed to think, who had opened the garden gate, and now stood within the walls watching the playful scene.

He had a somewhat fierce expression, but was a handsome man, wearing the native costume—a red fez, only half concealing his jet-black hair—a crimson velvet jacket heavily embroidered in gold—the white *fustanella* with its many folds secured round his waist by a

silken scarf, and gaiters of the same colour as his jacket, descending to his shapely feet.

These were pacific days ; but the Capitano Gregorios was the representative of a family that had fought fiercely in the Greek War of Independence, while he himself had been only too ready to do battle with the national enemy in any of the islands which were still under Turkish rule ; and in accordance with his strongest propensities he was armed to the teeth. Gold-mounted pistols were thrust into the breast of his jacket, a sword clashed at his side, and a dagger was embedded in the silken folds round his waist.

His entrance to the garden had been perceived by the young English lady, and she came forward to receive him, whilst the gazelle, delighted to have found her again, moved softly by her side.

Frances Selby had come to Greece at the age of fifteen, to live with a brother many years older than herself, who was her only near relation. He was a man of classical tastes, rejoicing in the possession of a large fortune, which enabled him to indulge his peculiar fancies, whatever they might be. These had led him some years before to settle in the land of his favourite heroes, and he had married a beautiful Greek, who was a member of one of the noble Phanariote families. Having thus established a home for himself, to which he could welcome his orphan sister, he had brought her away to Greece from the school in London where she had been educated, and for the last seven years she had lived with him and his wife at Angelokepos, without having had the smallest desire to return to England. She had been perfectly happy ; she loved Greece, and had learnt to speak the language like a native. She was devoted to the pretty Daphne, her sister-in-law, and to her brother's children, who showed more of their mother's nationality than of their father's, and she would have been well content to remain for life on these classic shores.

There was only one point on which Frances retained her English prejudices—and that was, her determination never to marry a Greek or any one but a true born Briton ; if a man answering to that description, with sufficient fascinations, should come in her way.

Now it was precisely to combat this resolution that the Capitano Gregorios had come to her home that evening. He was greatly captivated by Frances ; he had also ascertained, with all the shrewdness of an astute Greek, that she possessed the attraction, indispensable in his covetous eyes, of a considerable fortune, and he was absolutely bent on acquiring herself and her English guineas as his own undoubted prize.

After the fashion of his country he had made his overtures to her relations before addressing her personally, and by them his suit had been more or less favourably received—though he was informed that Frances being of age, was quite free from their control and must decide for herself. Mr. Selby told his sister he would be pleased if she settled in his adopted country, and Daphne eagerly descanted to

her on the charming spectacle which would be presented by such a handsome couple as herself and Gregorios when the bridal crowns were held over their heads.

To these remarks, often repeated, Frances always made the same laughing reply: "Gregorios is a savage, and I'll none of him. I would just as soon marry Costaki the brigand."

She little guessed what a strange significance such words were to acquire very speedily.

On this occasion the Capitano Gregorios was bent on conquest. As Frances approached, he gave her the ordinary Greek salutation, laying his hand on his heart, his lips and his forehead, but it was done with an expressive ardour, and the vehement passion that burned in his keen dark eyes told what she had to expect. She knew his declaration must come sooner or later, and it was just as well to have it over; so she made no objection to his walking with her through the garden, and taking a place by her side when she sat down at last under a palm tree. The clashing of his sword startled the gazelle nestling close to her, and she soothed it caressingly while she said somewhat contemptuously to the stately warrior: "Why will you encumber yourself with that great sword? you have no use for it now."

"At this moment, perhaps not," he answered, "though I hold high rank, as you know, in the Greek army; but how many heads of the accursed Turks do you suppose this very sword has shorn off?"

She shrugged her shoulders: "Do I know! half a dozen perhaps."

"Monacha?" he said with a scornful laugh, "only six! Bah! it has done better execution than that; a score would be nearer the mark."

"I do not believe you, vain coxcomb that you are," muttered Frances in English, of which he did not understand a word.

"But it is not of Turks or of swords I have to speak now, my beautiful Kuria" (lady), he went on to say vehemently; and therewith he plunged into a poetical declaration of his wild passionate love for her; assuring her that his very life depended on winning her, the bright sun of his existence, to be his adored and adorable wife.

She heard him to the end and then gave him a courteous but most emphatic refusal; his face darkened to an ominous degree: still he could not believe it possible that he, the great hero as he deemed himself, could suffer defeat at the hands of a woman.

"You only say this to try me," he exclaimed; "and you may indulge in your pretty coyness for a little time, if it amuses you, but it will make no difference in the result; what the Capitano Gregorios once resolves upon must be done; Kuria Frangiska, you shall be my wife, and no power in heaven or on earth shall prevent it."

The man's arrogance stung the proud English girl to the quick. She rose to her feet, turned her haughty face towards him and said with a clear ringing tone of defiance in her voice: "Capitano

Gregorios, I know not how you dare use such words to me, but it is the last time you shall have the chance. Understand once for all, that I would rather die than be your wife, and of my own will you shall never enter my presence again."

She turned to leave him, but he caught her wrist in a grip as of iron, while a wild expression of fury distorted his face.

"Have a care," he hissed through his set teeth; "you shall bitterly rue it if you attempt to defy me; when the Capitano Gregorios has a fixed purpose, be it what it may, he knows how to accomplish it. I tell you I mean to have you for my wife, and I will!"

She wrenched her hand out of his grasp at the cost of some physical pain, and calling to her gazelle to follow, without a word more to the infuriated Greek she turned on her heel, walked to the house and shut herself in, locking the door on the inside with a sound which he distinctly heard. The hot Southern temperament made the man look almost like a demon in his rage, but he shook his fist in the direction she had taken, while a deadly oath passed his lips that he would gain her yet, and that speedily.

II.

FRANCES SELBY followed the custom of her adopted country in taking a *siesta* during the hot hours of the afternoon, but the slumber thus obtained enabled her to wake with the dawn and indulge her British love of air and exercise before the sun rose to make movement out of doors almost impossible.

How exquisite that early morning hour is in the fair Hellenic clime it would not be easy to describe. The incense-breathing air sweet with the scent of wild thyme and other aromatic plants is soft and cool as it passes with the tenderest touch over all it meets; the great stars paling in the violet sky give place to the tremulous light that sheds a roseate blush over the East and brings out in strong relief the delicate outline of the distant hills, while the tuneful birds in the olive groves break out into a rapture of song.

All this Frances enjoyed to the uttermost every day during the summer, in a beautiful spot which was her favourite resort.

High up on the slopes of Mount Pentelicus was a little Greek chapel, such as may be found in isolated positions over all the country. Once a year only was any service performed in it, when a priest came for the purpose from some distant village, but it was left solitary and empty at all other times, except when a rarely passing peasant might go in to doff his *fez* and say a prayer. It commanded however a most lovely view extending even to the *Ægean* Sea, and there Frances was wont to spend daily a delicious morning hour resting on a broken marble column outside its low arched door.

She was sitting there as usual a few days after her decided rejec-

tion of the Capitano Gregorios, and not a sound had warned her of any danger, when suddenly she found herself blinded by a thick cloth flung over her head and face, and fastened tightly round her throat. At the same moment her arms were seized in a strong grasp and drawn back so that her hands could be tightly tied together. She tried to scream, but her cries were stifled by the heavy folds over her mouth, and she felt herself absolutely powerless when she was lifted up by a pair of vigorous arms and placed on the back of a horse. No sooner was she fixed on the high Turkish saddle than the animal started at a quick trot, led apparently by some man who rode by her side, and it was plain that she was being carried away helplessly, she knew not whither.

Frances felt stunned and terrified for the first few minutes, but soon the courage of the English girl reasserted itself, and she began to consider the situation with what equanimity she could.

She thought that she understood it perfectly—in which conclusion as it happened she was completely mistaken. She knew that the wilder and more uncivilised parts of Greece were infested by brigands, whose favourite pastime was to pounce on any unlucky traveller they could capture, and keep him securely in some of their mountain fastnesses till they could extort the ransom they demanded from his friends at home. She had never feared such a fate befalling herself. Her morning resort was not far from her brother's house; and he was now naturalised, and a man of considerable influence in the country. The brigands, she believed, would think twice before they tampered with his household; and besides, at that time there was a desire among Greeks generally to stand well with the English, which she had always imagined would save herself from any such attack.

However, she concluded she had been deceived, and that the temptation of gaining the high ransom her brother would certainly pay for her restoration, had overcome all other considerations.

It was a very unpleasant catastrophe, but she hoped it only meant a few days of disagreeable captivity—for she felt certain the robbers would not dare to do her any harm, and would simply keep her in rigid durance till the money was sent for her release. She knew very well the process they would go through to obtain it. A missive would be found in the morning on her brother's door-step, written in rude Greek characters, naming the sum, at a very high figure no doubt, which would be required for her ransom, and intimating that the money in the form of gold coins alone, was to be brought to a spot indicated on the mountains, where a messenger from the brigands would be waiting to receive it. Any failure to meet this demand in its fullest details would be followed, they would threaten, by the final disappearance of their captive, whom they would be under the necessity of dismissing to the shades in the realms of abysmal darkness.

That this was no idle menace had been proved a few years before by the sad fate of some well-known travellers, whose cruel assassination

at the hands of Greek brigands brought grief and desolation to many English homes.

Frances was very sure, however, that her brother would not delay an hour in meeting any demand that would restore her to him ; so this recollection did not alarm her, and she nerved herself to bear her temporary captivity with courage and patience, little dreaming that she was wholly deceived as to the causes which had led to it.

Hour after hour her horse plodded on with its burden, ever tending upwards over very rough ground. Once or twice the men whose steps she could hear around her, let it rest for a time in the shade, when water and forage were given to it, but she herself was not removed from her constrained position on its back, and she was completely exhausted with fatigue, when at length towards evening she was lifted down—carried a little way further in the arms of the men, and finally placed on what seemed to be a sort of couch.

Then for the first time the cloth that enveloped her head was removed—when her eyes, blinded for so many hours, grew accustomed to the light, she found that she was in the inner portion of a cave on the mountain side, which had been divided into two by a carpet suspended from the rocky roof, so that her apartment was entirely screened from that outside, where she could hear the voices of a number of men. It seemed evident that preparations had been made for her arrival, as the couch on which she sat, though formed of hay, was covered with some rich stuff and provided with cushions ; while a low round table at her side had been set out with food and wine. Only one man had remained standing before her, and looking up she recognised him at once as a notorious brigand named Costaki, whom she had formerly seen brought into Athens by soldiers, from whose custody he had very speedily escaped. He met her somewhat indignant gaze with a complacent smile, which was expressive of extreme satisfaction.

"The Kuria can rest now," he said, "no one will disturb her to-night ; and here is food—roast lamb, wine, and bread, let her eat and sleep well, she is perfectly safe."

"Send at once to my brother," she said imperiously ; "send this very night for the ransom. I know what you want, and you shall have it ; only do not keep me here an hour longer than can be helped."

She knew that to exasperate him by reproaches would be very unwise, so she said no more, though she was somewhat surprised at the peculiar expression which passed over his face at her words. He only gave her the graceful Greek salutation, however, and said "*Kali nikta*" (Good night) ; then he passed behind the curtain and disappeared.

Frances tried to eat some of the provision left for her as she felt the necessity of keeping up her strength, but she was so completely worn out that she very soon sank down upon her cushions and fell into a deep, restful slumber.

It was broad daylight when she awoke, roused apparently by the

talking and laughing of the band of men in the outer cave. When she once more realised the situation, her heart sank at the prospect of the time which must elapse before she could be released from her unpleasant position. But she rallied her courage, and seeing, to her surprise, as Greek peasants only make their ablutions once a year, that there was an ample supply of fresh water in a huge antique vase by her side, she gladly made use of it, and bound up her long hair as best she could.

Then feeling the air of her apartment hot and oppressive, she went boldly forward, pushed back the carpet at the entrance, and walked into the outer cave.

She found herself in the midst of some twenty or thirty rather ferocious-looking Greeks, who were seated on the ground in a circle smoking their chibouks and talking merrily amongst themselves. On her sudden appearance they all started to their feet, and Costaki, hastily placing himself in front of her, stretched out his arms to bar her passage. "No, Kuria," he said, "you must not attempt to run away."

"Did I say I meant to run away?" she answered contemptuously; "but, if you do not let me breathe some fresh air, I shall die; your tobacco smoke fills that place where I slept; let me go out on to the open ground. You know I can't escape."

Costaki hesitated for a moment, then seeing her determined expression he said with his false smile:

"Come, then, you shall go out; but you must have an escort like a royal lady."

He placed himself at her right hand, beckoned to one of the men to come to her other side, and thus guarded, they allowed her to leave the cave.

Frances looked round anxiously, hoping to ascertain in what part of the country she was, but she could form no idea on that score, for the place was entirely strange to her.

The cavern was situated not far from the summit of a luxuriantly wooded mountain, there was an open space on one side where the brigands' horses were tethered, but on the other was a tremendous precipice which went down without a break for many hundred feet. The scenery was beautiful all around, and the sweet morning air very grateful to the senses, and without asking any leave of her gaolers she went and sat down on a rock under the shade of a huge myrtle tree which grew above it.

Instantly at a sign from Costaki two of the brigands came and placed themselves on the ground at her feet. The others were superintending some cooking operations over a fire they had kindled in the open air, and presently they brought her a cup of steaming coffee and a piece of bread which were to constitute her breakfast. She took it readily enough, and late in the afternoon a second meal was provided for her from the roast lamb, which is the invariable diet of

the Greek peasantry ; but the hours passed very heavily, and when the sun had set and she saw herself doomed to another night of captivity, her fortitude almost failed her.

"Did you send for the ransom yesterday," she said angrily to Costaki ; "it might perhaps have been here by this time if you had let one of the men go at once to my brother's house."

"Ippomoni, Kuria," was his only answer.

"Patience?" she exclaimed, passionately ; "and how long do you expect me to have patience?"

"The Kuria must go to sleep now," he answered ; "nothing can be done to-night."

"You will make me desperate," she answered, stamping her foot on the ground. "I do not choose to pass another night in that stifling cave ; I want to go home now at once."

The brigand shook his head. "The Kuria cannot go home at present, and if she does not herself go back into the cave we shall have to carry her there."

Frances felt despondingly that she was quite at their mercy, and rather than that they should venture to touch her, she walked unresisting into her prison ; at least she was alone and unmolested there, and she flung herself down on the couch. But she did not sleep much that night, and as soon as she heard the men stirring in the morning she went out and took her place once more on her rocky seat with the guard watching over her as before.

"Costaki," she said, anxiously, "tell me when you sent for the ransom ; the money from my brother might have been brought already. You had better take care ; if you keep me here much longer you will have a regiment of soldiers out after you. The Inglesi are not to be trifled with."

"A regiment of soldiers," he said, with a sardonic smile ; "look there, Kuria," and he pointed to the steep narrow track which was the sole means of access to the cave. "Only two soldiers at a time can come up that way, and if any came we should meet them with some pretty little shots which would send them rolling back as dead men. I do not think many of the regiment would care to follow."

She saw that what he said was perfectly true ; the cave could be defended with the most perfect ease.

"Tell me what it is you mean to do then," she said, with quivering lips ; "of course it is the ransom money you want ; why are you making this needless delay?"

"We have a very good reason," he answered, "the Kuria will understand it all this evening."

He went determinedly away to avoid further questioning, and she was left to drag out the weary hours with all sorts of vague surmises as to what was to happen. At length the sunset hour arrived. Frances was leaning back against the rock half asleep when she was roused by a movement of some kind near her. Hastily sitting up,

with startled eyes she saw the brigands who had been guarding her disappearing into the cave, while in front of her stood the Capitano Gregorios, dressed in his handsomest costume, with an insinuating smile on his face.

For the moment she entirely forgot the nature of their last interview, and started to her feet with delight.

"Have you come from my brother?" she exclaimed. "Have you brought the ransom money?"

He laid his hand upon his heart as he answered, "Not so, Kuria—I have come here of my own will entirely, and it is rapture to me to look on your beautiful face once more."

She coloured with anger, but controlled herself so as to answer him gently:

"At least you mean to effect my release, I conclude—you, a gentleman, and my brother's friend."

"I do, and that instantly, but on one condition," he answered.

"What condition can you require?" she said. "You may guarantee any sum you please to those brigands; my brother will pay it."

"The condition has nothing to do with money. I have paid these men already for their services. Kuria Frangiska, you know that I love you; I have sworn that you shall be my wife, and as I have told you before, what the Capitano Gregorios vows will most surely be accomplished. I will release you at once from your captivity, and let you return home for the present, on condition that you go through a marriage ceremony with me in a little mountain church not far from here, where a priest is even now waiting to unite us. Listen," he added quickly as he saw her staring at him with a look of horror, "I do not mean to carry you away with me at once, afterwards—the ceremony may be considered in the light of a betrothal only—one which will bind you to me absolutely and for ever—but when it is over I will take you back to your brother for a little time till arrangements can be made for our public marriage in Athens with all the grandeur and pomp due to so lovely a bride." And he bowed low before her as he spoke.

The whole truth flashed upon Frances in a moment. This was no ordinary capture by brigands—the pitiful villain gazing eagerly into her eyes had arranged it all for his own infamous purpose.

"Then it is you who have organised this horrible outrage," she said, infinite scorn curving her proud lips; "I always thought you were a savage, but it seems you are a murderous brigand as well; no doubt you are simply the captain of this band of thieves and assassins."

"I am not," he said furiously, stung to the quick by her words; "these men know me, and they did what I told them, for I paid them liberally, but I am no brigand; you know very well that I am an officer in the noble Greek army."

"I can no longer believe it," she said. "Would a noble Greek soldier make war on a defenceless girl and lay a cruel trap for her as you have done? But it matters not what you are; I defy you utterly; you

can kill me no doubt if you choose, in this den of robbers, but you can never compel me to be your wife."

"We shall see as to that, my pretty lady," he said, with a fiendish smile. "If you had consented to come with me voluntarily to the church, I would have shown you all homage as to a queen, but if you oblige me to use force, I shall have my will easily enough. I have known how to deal with rebellious slaves before now."

As he spoke his dark face assumed a malignant expression, and he advanced fiercely towards her.

Instantly with one bound she sprang back to the very edge of the terrific precipice which yawned beneath her, and standing so close to the fatal brink as to be really in a position of imminent peril, she stretched out her arm to ward him off, and exclaimed—"If you come one step nearer, I fling myself over and go down to a welcome death which will save me for ever from you."

The man stopped as if struck by a thunderbolt; he was appalled; her flashing eyes, her resolute face left him in no doubt that if he moved she would accomplish her deadly purpose, and he saw that she was already in the greatest danger; an inch more would send her over the edge, her slightest movement might be fatal. Such a catastrophe would be in every way most disastrous for him, and he called out to her in terror.

"For the love of heaven, Kuria, have a care what you do! come away from the edge; the earth may crumble under your feet and you may fall without its being in my power to save you."

"I prefer that danger to the risk of being touched by you," she answered calmly. "I will not stir an inch from this spot unless you can satisfy me that you will not dare so much as to approach me."

"I will not, I will not," he cried; "I swear it by the *Panagia* and all the saints. Only come away from that fatal brink."

"Will you swear it by the cross on the hilt of your sword," she said, not moving a step from her perilous position as she spoke; "if you take an oath on the *Stauros*, I know that you must keep it, and these men will be witnesses of the vow."

The whole force of the brigands had assembled in a group behind Gregorios, and were listening eagerly, intensely interested in the scene, and she knew that he would be hopelessly dishonoured if he broke a vow taken in their presence. It filled the baffled hero with rage to be thus conquered by a girl; but he was in such abject terror of seeing her fall to be dashed to pieces at the foot of the precipice—for which calamity he would have to answer not only to her brother, but to the English Government—that he did not hesitate. He drew his sword from the scabbard, raised it in the air, kissed the cross on its hilt, and swore by that sacred emblem that he would not approach her, that she should pass untouched and unhindered into the cave, where she should be left perfectly alone for the night. He said these words aloud, and the brigands behind him all echoed, "*Malesta, malesta*" (So shall it be).

But there is little doubt that in his secret soul the Capitano registered another vow that he would yet subdue this proud English girl to his will, and that his temporary defeat should be of very short duration.

As the last syllables of his oath died on the air Frances slowly moved from the dangerous spot on which she stood, and with a quiet stately step passed through the ranks of the brigands as they fell away on either side of her, and entered the inner cave, bestowing not so much as a look on the crest-fallen captain, who stood apart literally gnashing his teeth with impotent rage.

III.

FRANCES sat down on her couch when the heavy carpet had dropped between her and the tumultuous scene without, and resting her tired head on her clasped hands, she set herself to consider with all her might what she could do to escape from the frightful position in which she was placed.

She felt that all depended now upon herself alone, her brother could not have the smallest idea in what direction to look for her. She had conquered the Capitano Gregorios for that one night, and till the morning she would be alone and safe—but only till then. She knew the man's implacable nature well, and she was perfectly aware that he had in no respect abandoned his indomitable purpose, and he was capable of resorting to terrible expedients for accomplishing his will. After all, she was but a helpless girl in the hands of an unscrupulous villain, backed up by a troop of robbers as cruel and reckless as himself.

While she pondered trembling on these alarming facts, her attention was attracted by the loud voices of the brigands in the outer cave, who seemed to be having a violent altercation with the Capitano Gregorios. She drew nearer to the curtain and listened breathlessly, in the hope that she might at least learn what their future plans were likely to be, with regard to herself. The robbers were vehemently reproaching Gregorios for the task he had imposed on them. He had compelled them to waste their time and energies in watching over this young girl for whom they were not even to have a ransom. There they were, the whole of them remaining inactive in the cave, while they were losing the chance of certain promising expeditions in other parts of the country, of which the arrival of a good many British travellers gave an inviting prospect. Had he not assured them positively that their guard of the young Kuria was to terminate that very evening? Had he not said that he would remove her from their custody at sunset, and there she was hanging on their hands as much as ever.

Then she heard Gregorios' imperious voice demanding silence, while

he assured them that the delay in removing his future bride was only a matter of a few hours. She had but foiled him momentarily by her threat of leaping from the precipice, and they had seen that she was in great danger of a fatal accident. He had been obliged to temporise at that instant, but they could not suppose—he continued with a scornful laugh—that he could be kept from his purpose by a mere obstinate girl! If he had taken a vow to satisfy her for a time, he was ready to swear to them on the Cross that by sunrise next morning he would carry the Kuria off to the church and marry her, let her struggle as she might. After this one night they would be entirely free of their charge, and he could give them the means of enjoying themselves till then. He had some bottles of raki in his saddle-bags—they should have the whole of it for a jovial carouse, while he himself went to acquaint the old priest, who was waiting in the church, that the marriage must be delayed till the morning.

This conversation would have plunged Frances in utter despair, but for the one gleam of hope which she derived from Gregorios' offer of raki to the brigands. Greeks do not readily become intoxicated, but she knew that this was an immensely strong spirit, which would at least have the effect of stupefying them so completely, that they would probably spend the night in a drunken sleep, and if escape were in any way possible for her, it was then she must attempt it.

She continued to listen anxiously, and heard Gregorios received with acclamation by the brigands when he gave them the raki, and then promising anew to be with them at sunrise, he departed.

For more than an hour after that Frances heard the robbers singing and shouting, as they drank the fiery spirit, but at last there were sounds which indicated clearly that it had taken effect upon them, and that they were falling down one by one in a heavy stupor. Gradually even their confused mutterings in slumber ceased, and at length all was still in the outer cave, so that she could even hear the regular breathing of the sleeping men.

Now was her time to make an effort for her freedom.

It was in truth a matter of life or death to her, for assuredly she would not live to be made by brute force the wife of the villain Gregorios. Commending herself to God, she rose and moved the intervening curtain that she might look into the outer cave. Yes! there were the brigands one and all prone on the earth and buried in the most profound slumber.

With trembling limbs and beating heart, she stole in amongst them, stepping lightly over the prostrate bodies as she made her way to the entrance. Once her strength almost failed her when she felt that her foot had touched the head of one who lay just in her path and as he moved she thought he was about to awaken; but he only rolled heavily over on his side, and in another moment she was outside the cave altogether in the free night air with the glorious stars of Greece shining over her head.

Then all her courage returned.

She ran noiselessly to the space where the horses were tethered—they were all bridled though the saddles had been taken off. She loosened the largest and strongest from his place and led him gently away. At once she began the descent of the rocky track which alone led to the cavern, and trembled again lest the sound of the horse's hoofs on the stones should reach the ears of the brigands; but the animal followed her swiftly with her light hand at its head, and soon they had gone a long way down the mountain side and had arrived at comparatively level ground.

Then Frances sprang on his back. She rode too well and fearlessly to be at all troubled by the want of a saddle, and she urged the horse to its utmost speed. Her one idea was to put as great a distance between herself and the brigands as was possible, and when at last after some hours' rapid riding she hoped this was accomplished, she slackened rein and drew a long breath of delight in the sense of freedom and safety. She felt sure there must be many miles between herself and the Capitano Gregorios, and that was a blissful conviction; but then arose the question: where was she? and in what direction must she go to reach her home?

She looked round and saw that she was in a perfectly wild and desolate region with no sign of human habitation anywhere.

The sun had risen and the stars had disappeared which might have guided her to some extent. The horse was contentedly cropping the herbs at its feet, while she reflected, and this reminded her that she had no food for herself, though she began to feel as hungry as a healthy young girl was likely to do under the circumstances; as she had not the remotest idea how to shape her course, she decided to go on in a straight line till she came to some village or peasants' hut which might give her a clue to her position. Riding slowly to spare the horse she went on hour after hour, but she seemed to have got into some desert world from which there was no outlet.

When the heat of the sun began to try the horse she dismounted and sat under a tree, while it made a scanty meal on such herbage as it could find. After it had thus rested for an hour or two she mounted again and went on with apparently as little prospect of arriving in any inhabited place as before.

Then, as the day drew towards evening, she became excessively fatigued. Hungry, thirsty, and exhausted, she bent over the horse's neck as it still plodded on. Her spirits sank within her, and she began to think she should have to die in that wilderness with none to know of her fate.

The sun had set, the horse was stumbling from utter weariness; was there any use in this aimless wandering? had she not better drop off its back and lie down on the ground to perish if no succour came to her? She had been more than thirty hours without food or respite from what seemed a hopeless journey. Brave, high-

spirited girl as she was, it was no marvel that her heart fainted within her.

Still the horse moved slowly onwards, and suddenly among the bushes at a little distance she caught a gleam of something white. Was it possible—could it be—yes, it was a tent! There were human beings at hand, and certainly not brigands, for those unpleasant individuals did not use tents.

She could hardly breathe in the wild joy and hope which sprang up within her. She had no need to guide the horse for its own instinct led it at once in that direction, and soon she was in full view of two small tents pitched in a sheltered spot on the side of a hill.

In front of the largest stood a tall young man, undoubtedly English, talking apparently to a servant of the same nationality, while near them was a Greek whom Frances instantly recognised as the well-known dragoman (interpreter) of the British Embassy, who was often sent with travellers into the interior. It was a most reassuring sight, but Frances perceived it only dimly, for she was half fainting in the revulsion of feeling.

The Englishman turned round at sound of the horse's tread, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"A lady on horseback—alone in this wild place!" he exclaimed.

But the dragoman starting forward cried out excitedly: "It is Kuria Selby! She has been lost for days—carried off by the brigands, it was supposed—the whole of Athens has been in grief and consternation about her—the saints be blessed that we have found her!"

"Ah, yes! I heard at the Embassy of her disappearance," and the Englishman advanced quickly towards her.

She could only murmur, "I am half dead—starving"—and almost fell from her horse. He lifted her down at once and carried her in his arms into the tent, where he laid her upon the cushions that had been prepared for his own night's rest.

"Bring some wine quickly, Fenton," he called to his servant; "and food; the poor lady is fainting from exhaustion."

It was instantly brought, and he held the glass to her lips, and then almost fed her like a child with the dainties which the servant handed to him. All three men, in fact, surrounded her with every care and attention till she gradually revived and sat up from among the pillows, thanking them all warmly for their kindness.

"Ah, Thanasi," she said to the dragoman, whom she knew, "do you know where my brother is? I did not know which way to go to him."

"He is at the Embassy sending out troop after troop of soldiers to find you, Kuria. He has been in terrible trouble about you. I am sure Mr. Melville will allow me now to go and tell him you are safe," he added, looking towards the Englishman.

"Yes, certainly," said his master; "take your horse at once and

ride off to Mr. Selby. Tell him we will take care of his sister till he can come for her."

The dragoman was gone almost before he had finished speaking, but Frances looked up timidly, saying—

"I ought to go with him, if only I were not so tired and faint. I am afraid I am a great inconvenience to you here."

"Not the least in the world," said the Englishman, with a bright smile on his handsome face; "this tent is entirely at your service for the night; my servant has another where I can locate myself. I may almost claim acquaintance with you, Miss Selby, for I brought a letter of introduction to your brother, which I have only not delivered because of his distress of mind about you; my name is Hope Melville."

"You have been more than a true ray of hope to me," said Frances, smiling: "it is such a blessed relief to find myself here in safety. I have had a most dreadful experience," and she shuddered at the recollection.

"Would it try you too much to tell me your adventures? I own to great curiosity on the subject, for it created much surprise in Athens that the brigands did not send to ask a ransom for you."

"Ah, that can be explained," she answered; and she then told him in as few words as possible the history of Gregorios' infamous scheme.

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Melville. "I hope he will speedily be caught and get his deserts on the scaffold; it is the only fit place for him."

"Do you think I am certainly quite safe from him here?" said Frances. "It has been my terror all day long that he might suddenly appear," and she grew pale at the thought.

"I almost wish he would," said Melville laughing, "that I might have the satisfaction of putting a bullet through him. But have no fear, Miss Selby; you may go to sleep in perfect security. I shall wrap myself in my cloak and lie outside your tent door all night, so that if the villain came he would have to deal with me before he could so much as get a sight of you."

Frances protested in vain against this arrangement for his own sake, though she could not deny the comfort his protection would give her; but he assured her he should enjoy a night *à la belle étoile*; and seeing that she was quite worn out he rose to take leave, and went out closing the tent door carefully behind him.

Frances passed a night of delightful repose, and was awoke next morning by the joyful sound of her brother's voice exclaiming: "My darling Francie, thank Heaven you are safe!"

Mr. Selby had brought his servants with his sister's own horse and its English saddle, and it was not long before the whole party were riding merrily towards Athens together. Mr. Melville had gladly accepted Mr. Selby's invitation to pay them a visit in their own house.

As Frances rode between him and her brother, with the escort of

servants following, the contrast between her position then and her terrible imprisonment at the hands of Gregorios raised her spirits to the highest pitch. Melville noticed that she was laughing softly to herself, and begged her to tell them what thought was amusing her.

"I was only remembering," she answered gleefully, "that I have become a brigand myself—I stole that horse, you know, which your dragoman is leading, and it must remain as my plunder; we cannot give it back to its owners."

"Do not let that trouble your conscience, Francie," said her brother; "you may rest assured that the horse was stolen goods already—possibly some of our friends may recognise the steed of which they have been despoiled, when they come to us in Athens."

Mr. Melville had intended pursuing his travels much further afield, but after a visit of some weeks to the Selbys, he discovered that Greece was a uniquely delightful country, and that the society was above all so charming, he could not possibly tear himself away from it.

So it came to pass that in the early autumn, pretty Daphne had the satisfaction of assisting at a very joyous wedding; although it took place in the drawing-room of the Embassy, and was simply performed by the English chaplain, instead of being enacted with all the beautiful ceremonies of the ancient Greek church. The tears she was disposed to shed when her dear Francie went away to England, as the wife of Hope Melville, were soon dismissed by their promise to return to Athens in the spring.

The Capitano Gregorios was never more seen in all the realm of Greece: he knew well to what he had exposed himself by his outrage on a British subject, and discreetly departed to some region where he had hitherto been unknown.



LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "IN THE LOTUS LAND," ETC., ETC.

DURBAN. *May*, 1893.

CARE AMICE,—In my last letter I was just able to chronicle the fact that we had at last escaped from our bondage at East London, and had safely arrived at Durban.

Nothing could have exceeded our gratitude when the *Dunottar* finally set sail, and the outlines of East London grew fainter by degrees and beautifully less. The sea was still running mountains high—if you will allow a little exaggeration—and decks and cabins were delightfully clear. We had them almost to ourselves. It was not a long journey: all being well we should reach Durban the next day before twelve o'clock.

As we did. The scene as the *Dunottar* dropped anchor was very lovely. The entrance to the harbour, the low-lying hills and undulations, ending in flats that reached down to where the waves broke upon the shore. Bluff Point stretching out to sea, green and luxuriant, on which the substantial lighthouse—which signals all approaching vessels to the town—looked white and dazzling; a spot in which one might spend a delightful and solitary month, enjoying the freedom and wide waste of blue and sparkling water, and unbounded expanse of sky. Unfortunately we had neither a month nor a week to give to it. There is no doubt that Durban, lying at the head of the bay of Natal, is the most beautiful harbour, as you look at it from the sea, on all the South African Coast. You fall in love with it at once.

Nor does any after-impression or experience disappoint you. We landed, as you have heard, in disaster. All our luggage had gone careering off to the Mauritius, and we had nothing but what we stood up in. "Homeless, ragged and tanned," Captain Robinson remarked, with what we thought extreme levity, besides adding insult to injury. This was after he had been off on his wild-goose-chase in the little tender—not badly named the *Fox*—to reconnoitre the huge and beautiful *Conway Castle*. He might just as well have despatched a sparrow after an eagle. When he reached the mouth of the harbour she was disappearing on the horizon.

But as you have heard, part of it was rescued, and we were saved days and weeks of discomfort. It was seen on the deck of the *Conway*—the most important half, happily—and was sent off again. But the remainder is in full sail for the Mauritius, or it may be put off at Madagascar, where its contents will adorn the natives. Sundry ostrich feathers and fans bought at the Cape will no doubt

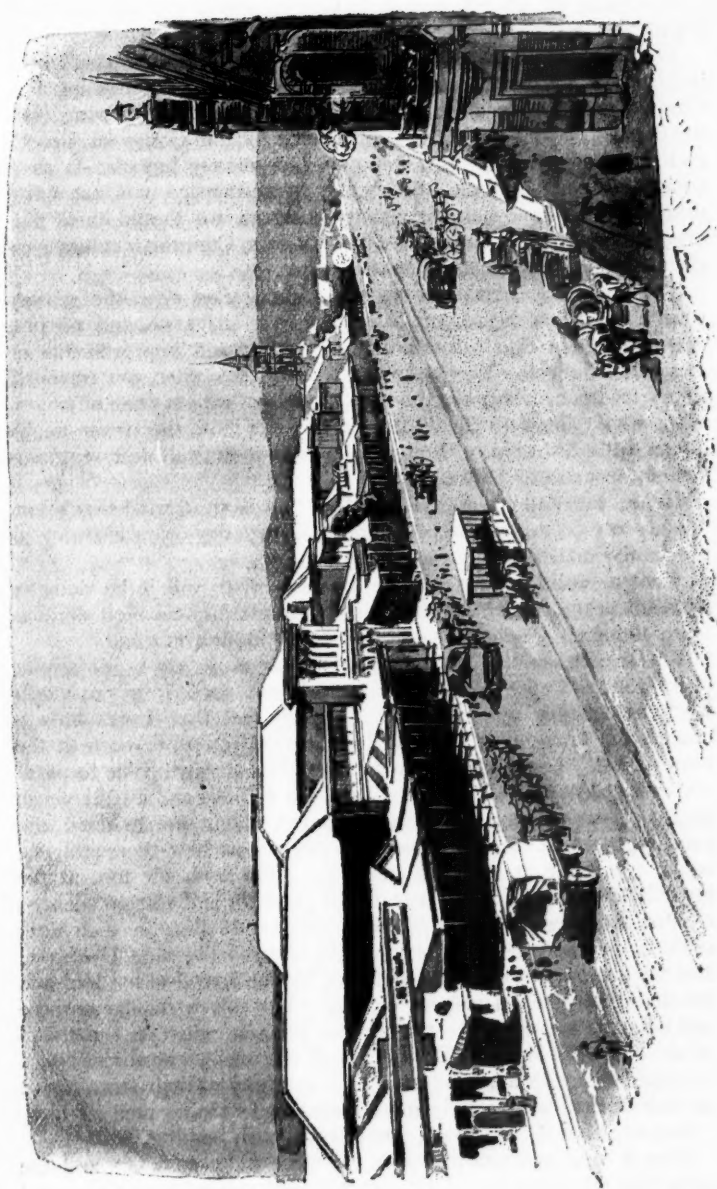
be appreciated, the one decorating the head of a copper-coloured chief, and the other cooling the fevered brow of his dusky squaw. This is one of the "incidents of travel" more common than agreeable: but it never happened to us before, and we are not responsible for its happening now.

When we landed we found it intensely hot; but there was a delightful brightness and brilliancy in the air. The loss of our luggage seemed a bad omen, but the dazzling atmosphere forbade any depression; whilst on receipt of the half of it, we veered round and prophesied success to our travels. So is poor human nature swayed by trifles.

The town is a little distance from the harbour, but there were any number of carriages ready to take us up. If our own Metropolis were only half as well supplied with public conveyances, it would be a happy thing for London. Under-paid cabmen have long been a favourite grievance there, but the first reform should be in what the late Chief Justice Bovill called the "ramshackle and uncomfortable vehicles, which were a disgrace to any civilised town." There was nothing of this in Durban, and in quite a distinguished carriage and pair we made for the hotel: Captain Robinson, in spite of his late levity, accompanying us.

We bowled along a broad white road, on which the tramway lines made us feel that we were in civilised regions. At the hotel we found excellent rooms in a court gracefully arranged with creepers and shrubs, round which a cool verandah kept the heat of the sun from the interiors: by far the best and most comfortable that we have yet found in South Africa; and I much doubt if we shall again equal it. From all we hear it excels them all: an excellent cuisine, a well appointed dining-room, a staff of good waiters, all dark, and many of them Indians. The landlord himself is anxious and obliging, doing everything he possibly can to make our short stay agreeable. These Indian Coolies were imported because the natives would not work—and excellent servants they make.

But this is what one might expect from Durban. It has the reputation of being the most rising place in the whole Colony, and we can quite believe it. If we might make a far-fetched comparison, we should call it the Paris of South Africa. Everything is new and bright and on a good scale. Here it has a decided advantage over Cape Town. The thoroughfares are broad, wide and straight, something like the Paris we have alluded to, without, of course, houses of twelve and fifteen storeys, a concierge, *ascenseur*, and population of one hundred and fifty palpitating beings. Here, on the contrary, many of the houses are little better than bungalows attached to each other; though in most of the thoroughfares no two houses are of the same height and build. It is as though every new inhabitant had arrived and pitched his tent next to the previous arrival, building according to necessity and his ideas of comfort and taste.



DURBAN.

Of course we do not find here Gothic houses and Queen Anne mansions. Simplicity is the rule of design.

The new buildings, however, belonging to important companies or large stores, are really fine, and the public offices are nothing less than imposing. We have indeed heard them called classical, but whether those who used the term referred to the glories of Greece and Rome or the Egyptian antiquities, or merely intended it as a comparative term between to-day and a century ago, was not quite evident. We have not met many to whom we should think the mysteries of cap and frieze, base and outlines, Corinthian columns or classic domes, familiar as household words.

The broad thoroughfares were made for the days when the railway whistle was never heard, and tramways were unknown, and no one dreamed of the rapid strides that the energy and improvements of 1893 would effect. They were made in the days when you travelled slowly, and your heavy waggon was drawn by a patient team of twenty oxen, who refused to be hurried, no matter how the driver might charm with his whip. And turning was a difficult feat requiring care and coaxing and space.

Hence I say the wide roads. And so it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and the people of Durban to-day owe something to the clumsy manœuvres of the past.

What a world of progress it is—and what will it be doing a thousand years hence? Paying morning calls to the stars—or returned to an aboriginal condition—having to begin all over again?

I fear, care amice, that is a question we must leave. It cannot affect you and me—a thousand years hence—and it is not worth while speculating upon it. But I always feel that I was born a century too soon—only I should have wished you to be born at the same period. Our Egyptian experiences must all have come to pass: our desert rides and moonlit Tombs of the Caliphs and all the magic charm of our evening converse, when you taught me to distil the true fragrance of the berry—and H. showed us how thoroughly he could appreciate it. You should have been with us, too, at the moonlit Pyramids, with all their untold grandeur and solemn silence; all the loneliness of the mysterious Sphinx, dwelling in such utter solitude age after age, ever looking out towards the wide Unknown, and the unseen Beyond, as if watching for the arrival of her lord and wondering why he delayed his coming. For this particular purpose and occasion we will make the Sphinx *feminine*, whatever the design of the ancients: those great founders of the world, whose ideas were in accordance with their country: high and lofty as their skies, broad as their desert plains, stately and far-reaching as their sacred river.

But what has all this to do, you will say, with South Africa?

True it is all part and parcel of the same wide continent, and the horse that takes you out of Durban will land you safely in Cairo, and if horse and rider have superhuman energies there need be no break

in the journey. But for all that the contrast is so great that it is two worlds : an old world and a new world : and as the comparison would become too invidious if we carried it further, we will compare no more. Honour to whom honour is due, and to each its merits.

So we return to Durban. We might return to many a less pleasant place on this world's surface ; we might even go further, and say that in some respects there are few places so charming and so beautiful. But its beauties are the beauties of nature and climate, assisted by the skill and labour of man.

To begin with we found the heat almost tropical, though we are here in full autumn season. Midwinter must be simply delightful without any of those "pale concluding signs which chill the heart."



A NATAL FARM.

Skies must be ever blue, grass green, and all the lovely vegetation in great beauty and form. But midsummer is trying, and those who can do so are very glad to escape into high latitudes : the karroo country, or an elevated plateau, where, 6000 feet above the sea, you may enjoy light, health-giving air—and irritating sandstorms. Every medal, you see, has its reverse side ; every man his dual nature, all sunshine its shadow somewhere, every Pleasure its Pain.

"Alike they are, though in much they differ,
Strong resemblance is 'twixt the twain ;
So that sometimes you may question whether
It can be Pleasure you feel or Pain."

To-day the sunshine, the white roads and the new white houses, all made a very dazzling picture, and I long for the old blue glasses we
VOL. LVIII. K

used to wear in radiant, beautiful, beloved Majorca ; in which, we were told by those who wished to be complimentary, that we looked like wise owls.

Durban was full of life and movement. Grass did not grow under the feet of its inhabitants.

En revanche, with the exception of quite the business thoroughfares, houses reposed in their own gardens, and all down a long straight thoroughfare the eye was arrested by a profusion of greenery ; graceful trees casting long shadows, flowers, a multitude of tropical plants in pots and tubs, all blending and harmonising with the blue sky.

It was a light and radiant atmosphere—we have already said so : sparkling and exhilarating like champagne, yet in the midday heat inclining to that *dolce far niente* state of existence when life for the moment must be taken as a dream, and realities become dim and shadowy, and the spirit has rest : a state of existence that must not happen too often, lest the paradise of the Lotos Eater, and the enervated nerves and hopeless incapacity of the Southerner, become your portion.

"Dark and true and tender is the north." All the finest characters come from it, with its bracing winds and frosty skies : wholesome moral influences which do good work and raise man to lofty heights he might not otherwise reach. For it is not by constantly fighting against the lower nature man gains the victory : that too often only ends in defeat : but in keeping his thoughts fixed upon the higher, and in trying to cultivate all its possibilities and seeing all its beauties. In a word, in looking upwards, and leaving the things of earth in a measure to look after themselves. He who aims at the sky shoots higher than he who aims at a tree.

But why, to-day, is my pen discursive ? And why do I presume to talk to you of moral victory or defeat, and point the way ? You, who have laid bare to me your inmost heart, with all its great endeavours and high aspirations, and lofty ideals realised ? You whom I place above most men I ever met, and whose nature—intellectual and moral—reaches nearer perfection than any I had ever known before ?

And yet—we have agreed that it is well and wise, it is better, in our letters, to tell out all our thoughts, so that no *arrière pensée* shall come between, and raise up those fine impalpable barriers which have been, and are, so constantly destructive to true friendship. That friendship, without which the world would be a blank and life a void, and some of our most ennobling qualities would die for want of sustenance. There comes a time in every man's life—unless his monument be a broken pillar—when as Wordsworth says :—

" . . . Nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, or glory to the flower : "

or as Byron less chastely but more passionately exclaims :

"There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,
When the glow of early thought declines in feeling's dull decay . . ."

But friendship is eternal, and outlives youth and age and time and romance, the chilling influence of the world with its winter blight and blasts of constant disappointment and shattered idols. "We receive but what we give" has been said, but with rare exceptions, our experience tell us that we give infinitely more than we receive. Those exceptions are our Friendships: and so, as Shakespeare says, that wonderful dissector of the human heart, who seems more true to man than man to himself :

"The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel."

Though Durban was full of life and activity, a certain atmosphere of progress and success, there was no undue noise and bustle and commotion anywhere visible. People seemed very much in earnest, but there was also a "due deliberation" about them, entirely free from the breathless condition of things and people generally found in large business towns.

Down the principal streets went tramways to and fro, but in these wide thoroughfares they in no way interfere with other traffic. And indeed this may have something to do with the leisurely look of the walkers: in these broad thoroughfares they need not tread upon each other's heels and jostle each other's elbows, as they do in the business streets of our own "London town."

Much calmer and quieter they looked even than Cape Town, but in every way Durban has the advantage in point of situation and aspect. We might almost call it Cape Town in holiday attire. The streets of the latter are a mixture of new and old, some wide, many narrow, straggling and ill-paved; whilst the general aspect of the business portion is that it has grown shabby and would be all the better for repainting.

In spite, too, of the grandeur and splendour of Table Mountain, the town is a little oppressed by this huge wall of rock, from which there is no escape.

It is one thing to ascend it, and gaze out upon the wide ocean, beautiful here as at Durban; one thing to go round it in that wonderful Victoria Drive, and mark the outlines of the Lion Rock, and take the number of the Twelve Apostles, giving to each its name, as the fancy pleases you; one thing to gaze upon the luxuriant hill-sides with their purple heather and silver trees—pictures that enchant the eye by their colouring; to gaze upon the rich vineyards of Constantia, which send forth their cordial to revive the drooping spirits, and bring back to the heart its life-blood; but it is quite another thing to dwell under the very shadow of this immense mass of

impenetrable rock. The eye grows weary of tracing its outline against the blue ; and the oppression increases until you feel that nothing will relieve it but a vigorous climb and a long, far look-out on the other side.

So at least it strikes a stranger. It may be that the inhabitants of Cape Town, born and bred under its influence feel none of these "wild pulsations," which come with such a sense of pain to those who long to reach the mountain top and breathe its glorious oxygen. Certainly those we met appeared to trouble themselves very little about the mountain, or even to seem aware of its existence. Their whole thoughts were centred upon the prosier matters of business, and the very real and important considerations of getting on in life, and waxing rich, and making hay whilst the sun shone : the race for wealth common to all the world.

In Durban they took things more leisurely, and it was much more agreeable.

Everything about its situation was beautiful and refined ; the wide bye-thoroughfares we have referred to delighted the eye with their rich arrangements of trees and flowers ; houses standing back full of repose and the "dignified leisure of life." There was no Table Mountain to cast its shadow and oppression. Look which way you will, the eye rests upon a broad open expanse, a marvellous blue sky.

Durban stands fairly high above the sea, so that enervating as it may be in the tropical heat of summer, you are open to all the winds that blow. Outlines there were, but they were wide and glowing. From a height you gazed down upon the harbour which from this distance looked charming and dreamlike ; full of repose and the picturesque element that ever accompanies ships and their beautiful forms, and all the brightness of colouring which is never absent from any scene where the flags of all nations are flying. It was a perfect and enchanting picture to trace the outline of the harbour—that wonderful natural harbour, with its low, green sloping banks, ending in the Bluff with its lighthouse boldly confronting the sea.

And beyond all, the marvellous ocean, its waters blue and green, and clear as crystal, flashing, dazzling in the full sunshine. The land looked like an emerald in a wonderful sapphire setting. A clear, rarefied atmosphere rendered everything distinct, everything near ; commonplace objects would have looked beautiful—how much more all these wonders of creation. Their charms can never be sufficiently studied, their influence upon heart and soul never exaggerated. "If I want to *serve* God," said a great man, I go into the town ; but if I want to *feel* Him I go into the country." It affects the intellect no less ; a little solitude and meditation amongst these high and ennobling scenes restores the balance of an overstrained mind and overtaxed nerves, which distort our views of life, so that we cannot rightly judge of anything, losing sight of the



ST. JOHN'S RIVER : WITHIN THE GATES.

good around us, exaggerating the ill. Above all they give us dark and gloomy views of our fellow-man, and we grow distrustful and suspicious, and every sign and signal is misinterpreted.

But to dwell for a time amidst the beauties of nature makes a man whole once more, and he sees "good in everything:" brooks sing for him their healing song, trees whisper their message, the blue sky bids him look upwards hopefully, and the winds of heaven fill his whole being with rapture.

"One impulse from a vernal wood
Will teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can."

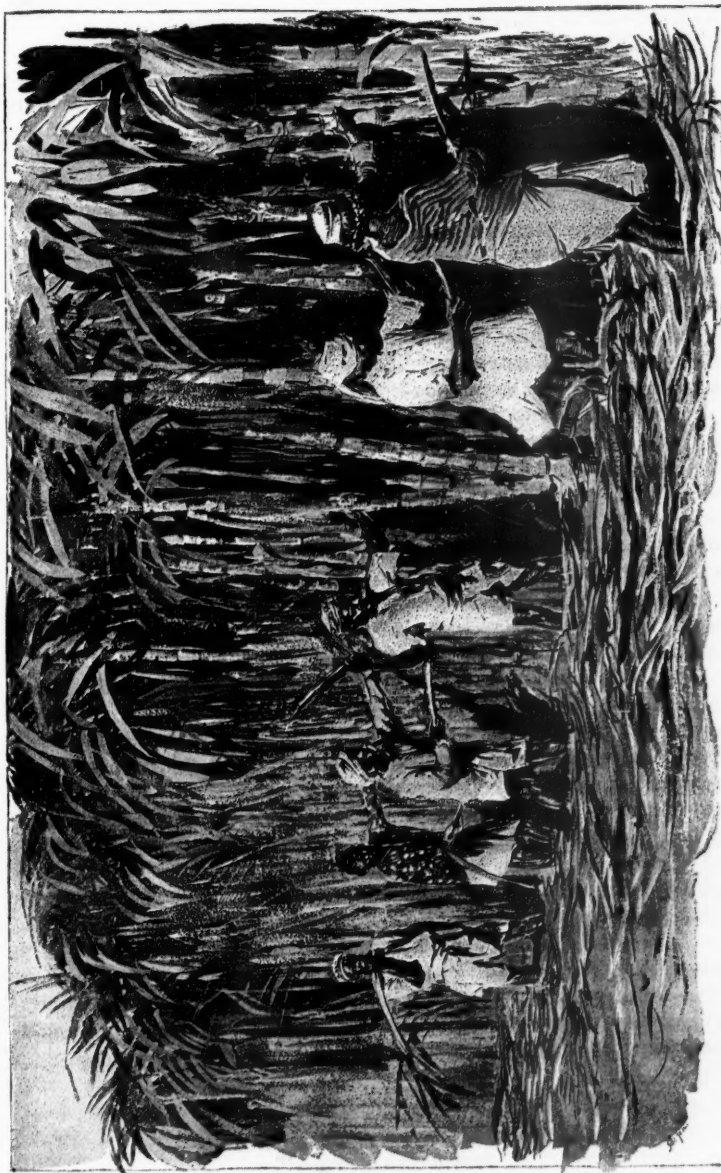
Nothing is more true.

We found the hotel fairly crowded, to which many passengers from the *Dunottar* had added their number. Some of these guests were noisy, others combined with noise what may be politely called an "energetic hilarity," to which distance lent its charm. Good comradeship no doubt exists in South Africa; and "board-ship friendships" are carried on indefinitely by those who have discovered that they are kindred spirits: so that they join common cause and interests, and explore the country together. There is an irrepressible hail-fellow-well-met element about them not exactly in keeping with the manners of a courtier; but they enjoy themselves in their own way—and one cannot interfere with the liberty of the subject.

Our obliging host gave us a quiet table to ourselves, admirably appointed with snow-white linen and spotless silver. A profusion of tropical plants and evergreens refined and beautified the scene.

Unnecessarily large for two, and the hotel crowded, we arranged that a Dutch lady and fellow-passenger should join us. The whole room was admirably arranged, and the dinner was excellent. The dark waiters dressed in Indian costumes, many of them with white turbans, looked imposing; spotless as the table cloths, as if they too had all just been washed and mangled.

Our own waiter was a young lad of about twelve, but one of the sharpest and quickest in the room. He informed us that he was Indian and that his father and mother lived a little way up the country. His dark eyes flashed with pleasure whenever we complimented him upon his *savoir-faire*. The way he stood at the proper distance from us, a perfect attitude when not serving, would have become the foremost of English butlers. Every wish was anticipated. He was full of intelligence and spoke excellent English. H. asked him if he would come over to Europe and be his tiger and general factotum; and the little fellow with a wistful look replied: "He couldn't go so far away from father and mother." But his admiration for H. was evidently unbounded, and he seemed half inclined to take the matter into earnest consideration: which would have placed H. in a serious



CUTTING THE SUGAR CANE, NEAR DUREAN.

predicament. I should have had to take the tiger off his hands until such time as he was ready for him.

Our Dutch lady-companion was much amused with his grown-up airs and bearing and *aplomb*. He was certain of himself, and every now and then gave a look at H. which very plainly said: "You see that if I did become your tiger I should be equal to anything."

The Dutch lady, Baroness Van Tromp, fortunately for us spoke excellent English and French: for much as we admire Holland, we have "no Dutch" at our command. At the Cape she must have felt very much at home, for there you hear the language spoken, and many things remind you that the Dutch settled here many generations ago. But in Durban the element is conspicuous by its absence.

"I am a descendant of the great admiral who placed a besom at the mast-head and said he would sweep the English from the seas," she remarked: "or rather, my husband was," she corrected.

"But Van Tromp found his boast a very idle one," said H., "and he had to haul down his besom."

"Yes," Madame Van Tromp quaintly replied. "He found that for every single besom of his, the English could produce two besoms: and so the poor man got the worst of it. He had reckoned without his host; and yet I don't think that pride and vain-glory and boasting can be very much laid to the charge of the Dutch."

"Not to-day, perhaps," said H. "But in those days the Dutch were a great people. They had had great successes, and it was natural they should think themselves equal to anything."

"So that success is evidently a dangerous thing. A little pride puffeth up. *La fable du bœuf et de la grenouille* over and over again. It is easier to gain our laurels than to wear them becomingly."

"Because even great minds do not always rise to the occasion," returned H. "And then accident has often something to do with a man's success: a fortuitous concord of circumstances, or more vulgarly speaking, *luck*; *la main heureuse*, as the French say in their games of chance; this often gains the laurels; but accident will never give him the tact and grace to wear them. These must come from the man himself and prove the metal he is made of."

"Not always gold, I fear," laughed Baroness Van Tromp. "It is so difficult for a man to know himself, and correct his weaknesses: and so they remain to prove the imperfection of human nature. Have you not a poet who says something of this sort—about people seeing themselves just as they are?"

"Oh wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see ourselves as others see us,
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
And foolish notion—"

quoted H. "It is Burns who says that. I fancy he knew about as

much of the human heart as most poets, Shakespeare excepted. Like Sirius amongst the stars, *he* cannot be classified."

"*Hors ligne*, as the French say. Well, Burns may have been a great connoisseur of the human heart," added Baroness Van Tromp, drily, "but I do wish he had not expressed his ideas in that impossible Scotch language, which only a Scotchman can understand. It may be very fine, but to me it seems very clumsy—what you call homely; and whenever I read him I cannot get the feeling out of my brain: 'This is the plough-boy poet.' Oh, I know what you would say," she cried, as H. was about to make a remark: "his genius—and all that. I am quite willing to admit it; but I wish it had been differently expressed. If I were a Scotchman, no doubt I should reverence him; but being only Dutch, he is unintelligible."

We had reached the "ice pudding" stage in the menu, and both Madame Van Tromp and H. made comical grimaces at each other as they found it more degrees below freezing-point than they had anticipated. "At least this is not *Burns*, laughed our lady friend, "if a *jeu-de-mot* may be allowed in South Africa: though, like the poet, the quality is extremely good."

"And not unintelligible," added H.

"And yet both homely and poetical," she laughed again. "Ice pudding is the poetry of food. But if we go on we shall get foolish, or mixed, or out of our depth. How delightful that you should have procured this table for us, *tout à fait à part*."

Later in the evening, when the shades were falling, refining and poetising everything, we wandered down to the harbour and the shore. Everything was still and calm and beautiful. The shipping was all at rest—that wonderful tranquillity that always distinguishes a sleeping harbour. Not a sound from any vessel; nor the barking of a dog nor the straining of a rope. The flags were all down, and by so much the bright effect of colouring was removed. The good-tempered looking Zulus had done work for the day, and disappeared. One missed their presence, for they are full of life and movement; and I hope we may see the day when they will become Christianised and civilised members of the world. They appear equal to it, and worthy of having time, thought and trouble given to them.

Further down on the flat reaches of the shore, looking out oceanwards, they have built an hotel and small colony of houses: and many persons might prefer this situation to any other. To the right stretches Bluff Point with its lighthouse. Above, there is the vast expanse of sky, and below, the vast extent of sea. The water for ever plashes and murmurs upon the shore, the tide for ever ebbs and flows; and in stormy weather, the waves in this bay of Natal sweep in with a voice of thunder, breaking and dashing themselves in vain fury against the immovable rocks of the Point, their spray reaching up to and surrounding the very lighthouse itself.

To-night everything was in repose; the waters were calm and

placid. Out in the bay, the *Dunottar* was riding majestically at anchor : a thing of beauty, but not a joy for ever. Many a miserable hour have hundreds of her passengers passed in their cabins whilst she toiled manfully against wind and weather.

There was no suspicion of anything of this sort to-night. Like the harbour, she was an emblem of repose. And as the shades grew deeper, and her outlines more shadowy and unreal, and all her lights appeared, she looked like some mysterious thing of life and power and enchantment. The sun had set in majesty and glory. Cloud flakes of gorgeous gold and crimson floated upon the wonderful opal sky beyond, deepening above into the richer blue. A star hung trembling and liquid in the west. The sea became a painted ocean, warm and flushed and full of unfathomable reflections. Then all gradually faded ; darkness fell and shut out the scene ; and in the deep dark blue stars and constellations began their solemn march, large and brilliant as they ever are in this rarefied atmosphere ; the solemn mysterious stars ; those countless worlds of which we know nothing, travelling for ever and for ever in the eternal silence of space.

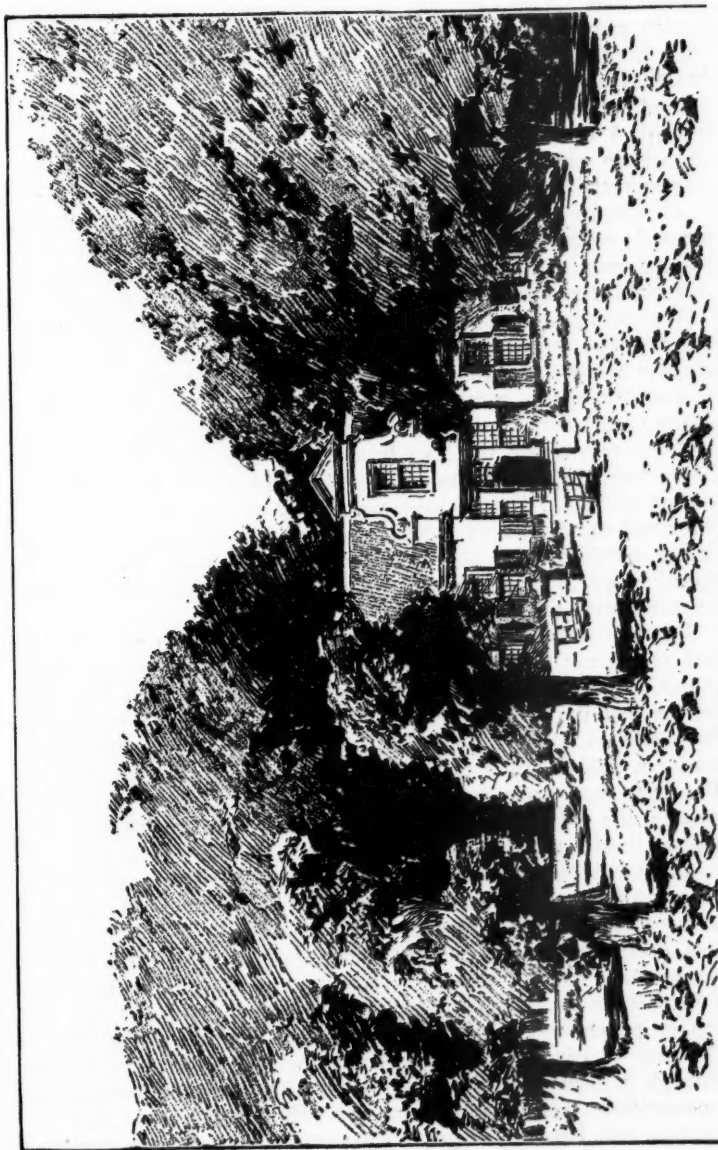
The next morning we devoted an hour to replacing all the necessary *articles de voyage*, which the missing portmanteau careering on its wild way to the Mauritius rendered imperative. Unfortunately all our photographic plates and rollers have gone, and these we cannot replace. All the thousand reminiscences of travel that we had intended to store up for the future can never be taken. This is really a loss and a grief to us, and we look upon it as a misfortune. Everything else can be had under one roof ; for they go in very largely for the "store" system out here. All places large or small are called stores ; the word "shop" is beneath them, and does not exist : a fine distinction, of which they no doubt see the point.

At any rate we found our store very useful, and the people very obliging.

Amongst other things they persuaded us to buy hats "for the sun," assuring us that in travelling we should run the risk of sun-stroke without them. H. went in for a large straw, which they trimmed up very elegantly, as the Americans would say, and I became enamoured of an enormous felt, which sent H. into irreverent convulsions, whilst he declared that I looked what Mrs. Malaprop would have called the very moral of a Greek brigand. In fact, for ever after, though you would think vanity ought to be extinct at my mature age, I shall only be persuaded to put it on when the temperature is 110° in the shade. In vain he now declares it "becoming"—the mischief is done.

Our purchases over, we next proceeded to explore what really is the great charm and beauty of Durban—the Berea.

This encircles the town, and round it a tramway travels. It lies higher than the town, and all the well-to-do people of Durban live here. To us it seems one of the loveliest spots in the world : a



A DUTCH HOUSE OF THE EARLY SETTLERS, CAPE COLONY.

small earthly paradise. Here life ought to pass in an enchanted dream. The houses all look large and excellent, and built with a certain amount of taste and style. Every one of them stands far back from the road, and higher than the road, each in its own beautiful and extensive gardens.

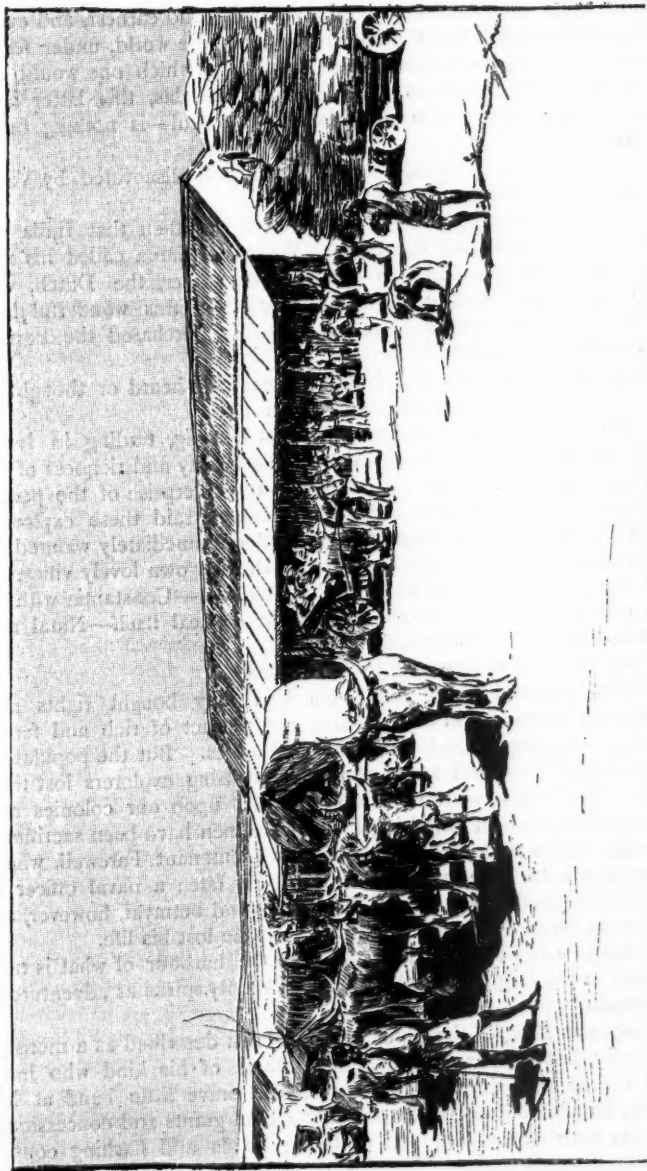
And it is these grounds that form the chief delight. Each individual owner seems determined that his own property shall exceed in care and beauty that of his neighbour. Everything consequently is in perfect order. Beautiful trees grow without too much system and regularity; palms and other tropical vegetation abound; gorgeous flowers filled the air with scent and colour; pampas grass, with its graceful feathers, bends to the slightest breeze; rich undulating lawns of greenest turf delight and refresh the eye.

We could never tire of gazing upon this paradise where nothing is too stiff and formal; and wonder whether the people whose lives are cast in these pleasant places, appreciate their privilege.

And the charm continues, for the Berea seems never ending. Many of the houses, surrounded by cool verandahs, stand so high on their own slopes, that they have an extensive view of the lovely ocean beyond the town, the outlines of the coast, and all the shipping that may pass. Rarely have we seen a spot in which we think we could dwell with so much happiness and content. Above all is the matchless blue sky; surrounding all, glorifying all, the clear, sparkling air, alone worth a king's ransom; to breathe which almost seems to make life worth living.

Possessing the Berea, Durban may fairly lay claim to a beauty and charm not to be found we are persuaded elsewhere in South Africa. One of its merits is that whilst distinctly apart from the influence of the town, it is not too far away, so that the inhabitants have only to spend a little time in going to and fro to their daily business. This morning the temperature was intense, almost tropical; the dusty road seemed at a white heat, and the grateful shadows cast by the roadside trees were black and sharply outlined. The houses looked the perfection of coolness, repose and dignity. A month spent here would pass as a vision, and it is one of the few places in South Africa that as yet have inspired us with a longing for a more intimate acquaintance. The drawback is that a month of this dream-like existence would only leave us with poor Oliver's desire "for more:" though it is always wise to give up everything before familiarity begins to disillusion. And wherever the senses are strongly stirred disillusion must come; it is inevitable; the law of cause and effect; compensation. Everything is seen through a glamour, which never lasts. The calm and serene, the unemotional, this gives place to the wild exalted mood, and expecting less, lasts the longer. The fiercer the storm, the sooner it is over.

The very word Natal has a pleasant sound, when we know why it



A STATION, "UP-COUNTRY," NATAL.

is so called, and cast back our memories into the far-off past; those middle ages, when men were bold and strong and earnest, and everything was beautiful, and the ancient towns of the world, under feudal dominion, raised up monuments to their glory, which one would like to think imperishable as time itself. But, alas, this latter hope and thought—like much else that is beautiful—is nothing but a dream.

Natal then was so called because it was first discovered by Vasco de Gama on Christmas Day 1497.

That was a voyage full of results, for it was then that India was first reached by way of the Cape. Vasco de Gama called his new land Terra Natalis, and two hundred years later, the Dutch, who were then established at the Cape, hearing of this wonderful land through some shipwrecked sailors, presently purchased the Port of Natal from a native chief.

They did little more, and Natal was scarcely heard or thought of until the present century—about the year 1820.

Then a party of sportsmen, elephant-hunting, trading in ivory, seem to have become impressed with the beauty and richness of the country, reported thereon, and awakened the enterprise of the people of Cape Colony. It was a land of Goshen, said these explorers, and the mouths of the Cape Colony settlers immediately watered for the grapes of Eshcol. Not contented with their own lovely vineyards growing under the shadow of Table Mountain—Constantia with its rare wine-cellars, in which an army might conceal itself—Natal also grew into a Naboth's vineyard for them.

They obtained it, however, by fair means.

Chaka was the chief, and from him they bought rights and privileges: a concession of the coast, and a tract of rich and fertile country stretching inland for a hundred miles. But the population was a savage tribe, and some of the enterprising explorers lost their lives. This is always the shadow that lies upon our colonies and great possessions—in acquiring them brave men have been sacrificed. Amongst those under consideration was Lieutenant Farewell, whose name seems to have been ominous of his fate: a naval officer of great bravery and good sense. Treachery and betrayal, however, are hard weapons to fight against, and by them he lost his life.

It was in 1823 that he first sailed into the harbour of what is now Durban, in the brig *Salisbury*, with about twenty spirits as adventurous as himself.

Chaka was King of the Zulus, and has been described as a monster of cruelty, but he was no worse than others of his kind who have lived before and since. He received the brave little band at his military kraal with due civility, and made them grants and concessions. Presents were exchanged, and glittering beads and flashing copper ministered to his vanity. Not his the creed of "beauty unadorned." On that occasion he was surrounded by 12,000 warriors, who with

shields and assegais, war-paint, feathers, and flashing eyes, must have presented a formidable appearance.

Courageous must have been our little band of explorers, for they were venturing into a lion's den. Twenty-five thousand men and women took part in a war dance, and endless cattle passed in review before them. Chaka boasted of his wealth and power, declaring himself the greatest of living monarchs, governing a people countless as the stars. Of the English he professed great contempt, ridiculing the idea of turning hides into shoes, when they were far more useful and ornamental as shields.

Everything, however, at their first visit went well.

They received grants of land, and Farewell established his camp where now flourish the Town Gardens of Durban—graceful memorial to so brave a man—though the Gardens were not placed here with that intention. Lieutenant King, one of his brave comrades, took the Bluff, that portion which we first see on dropping anchor in the waters of the bay; and later on, the Bluff was to become his grave.

In this small territory of the Bluff they discovered a few half-starved, terror-bound natives of the *Amatuli* tribe, who were not distinguished for refinement of life or elegance of dress. These had taken refuge here after Chaka's invasion, and as they were not particularly in his way, he magnanimously spared their lives. They lived luxuriously on roots and shell-fish, and here remained for years, unmolested, never showing themselves, never seeing a vessel or a strange face. A shipwrecked sailor, a white man, was once cast adrift amongst them, and they put him to death as an unknown species of sea monster with dangerous tendencies.

At first they looked with suspicion upon our small band of explorers, but kindness presently gave them confidence, and the wild men grew tamer.

This little Colony soon became a City of Refuge, to which all the natives found their way when under the displeasure of Chaka the despotic. He, indeed, was a monster in many ways, and one of his greatest enjoyments was to put a few hundred of his followers, men and women, to death, for the pleasure of seeing their life-blood flow past him in a red stream. The wonder is that he allowed our explorers to settle in the country, even granting them a territory, and permitting his followers to escape to the English settlement when their life was in jeopardy.

But so it was: and the land was well named Natal, which was only another word for Christmas, meaning Peace on Earth, Good-will towards men.

In a few years this haven of refuge had a large following, and no doubt many a savage nature was tamed and civilised and Christianised by the explorers, who were true missionaries in everything but name.

For a time the settlers enjoyed peace and quietness; the country

was a rich land of promise ; there was every possibility of trading in ivory and other things ; Chaka was disposed to be friendly.

Then the English settlers managed to build a small schooner, which was to trade between Natal and Port Elizabeth. They named it the *Chaka*, after the Zulu King, and in feathers and war-paint and with an army of followers, he condescended to speed them on their way. He was anxious to stand well with England, and to enter into a friendly alliance. Evidently this monster of cruelty was both intelligent and capable of better things. His savage nature and surroundings, his want of opportunities—much was due to these influences. They only act according to their light, these savages. *Savoir tout, c'est tout pardonner*. What a blessing it will be—what a long-drawn breath of relief—when the last savage has disappeared, and civilisation shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas. Will that time ever come? Not unless the world is still in its infancy—but many of those best able to judge think we have entered upon the perilous times of the last days. They are certainly perilous enough.

All went well for a time with our explorers. Chaka, we have seen, in war-paint and feathers, wished their little bark prosperity—which she was never to have. As is so often the case, a man's foes are they of his own household, and civilisation retarded her own progress. At the Cape they would none of the King of the Zulus. No alliance should be formed with him. It was a mistaken policy, which threw back the prosperity of Natal many years.

The poor schooner *Chaka*, every nail of which had been driven in with hope and trust, was confiscated at Port Elizabeth, where she went to rack and ruin, and the brave and enterprising band of explorers and traders were sent back to Natal in a war sloop.

Lieutenant King fell ill of disappointment and vexation, and died a martyr to his cause at the Bluff, where he lies buried.

Chaka was offended. The Cape government sent him presents by way of conciliation, but this only made matters worse, for he did not think them good enough. Cattle and feathers, war-paint and beads were all below the mark. Probably he would have put an end to the settlers and taken back their land, for revenge is the first law of the savage ; but he was himself murdered by his brothers, who, seeing that he was growing in cruelty and shedding more and more blood, feared their own turn might come if they were not beforehand with him.

One day Chaka took upon himself the office of a "dream doctor," and athirst for blood, put 400 women to death. Shortly after this, whilst choosing some favourite feathers for decoration, the brothers came up behind him and stabbed him in the back. In his death agony he is said to have seen a vision, declaring that he beheld white men afar off who would one day possess the land and be its masters : and his death would be avenged.

So it came to pass ; and to-day the fair country of Natal rejoices

in the rule of the "white men." The seed sown by that little band early in the century has borne fruit. The richness of the soil rivals the beauty of the land ; therefore it must be rich indeed, for Durban is an earthly paradise. It would be too much to say that its inhabitants are angels, but surrounded by such lovely influences they ought to be in that happy condition of life, when the golden hours run out in constant harmony, "and all is piety and all is peace."

SONG.

ALL in the golden morning
Ere dust had dimmed the day,
She came across the meadow—
She trod the dewy shadow
Singing all the way.
'Oh, I am blest beyond the rest,
And the world is sweet with May,
And the sky is blue, and my love is true,
For all he is far away!"

All in the silver morning
Ere feet had tracked the snow,
She trod the bare wide meadow
Beside the brown wood's shadow,
Sighing soft and low—
"Oh, I am curst beyond the worst,
For the flowers forget to grow,
And the skies are grey and the one away
Forgot me long ago!"

All in the April morning
When gold and silver chime,
She laughed across the meadow,
Through the green wood's dappled shadow,
With feet that danced in rhyme—
"Oh, best and worst, and last and first,
The old earth is in her prime,
For the sky is clear, and my love is here,
And he loved me all the time!"

E. NESBIT.

L

AT THE SEIGNEURIE: A CANADIAN STORY.

BY ADA M. TROTTER.

I.

NÉONIE McFEE, a Scotch maid, transplanted for the nonce to the backwoods of Canada, took stock of her surroundings and bravely determined to make the best of them.

First of all came Madame; an intense objective point in full focus, this great-grandmother, whose strong arm had stretched across the wide Atlantic and wrestled for one year's possession of her namesake Néonie. Madame, descended from the old French *noblesse*, was Marquise in her own right, did she choose to claim the title; and proud of her race as of her rank, exacted all ceremonious observance from the members of her household. To Néonie, fresh from the heart of a sincere loving home-circle, these small courtesies were exasperating in the extreme. She felt as though her heart were gradually ossifying under incessant training in courtly etiquette; "stage effects" she called them in her letters home.

Madame was a mystery no search-light (turned on by so innocent a soul as Néonie's) could solve. Why had she sent for her? What did the fire in those glowing eyes mean? Love? Hate? *What* does she want with me? asked Néonie, as the dull days dragged wearily onwards; and she looked vainly afield for entertainment.

The old Seigneurie, a reminiscence of the De Leroux Château in Normandy, was a large rambling building, protected by a moat, and by a block house from incursions of the Indians. The moat was now a mere covert of bramble; the block house a ruin; yet the mansion, kept in repair by successive generations, held its own against wind and weather. But Néonie as she wandered restlessly about the dreary old home felt as though its reputation, that of being haunted, was well earned, for how often she paused to listen to footfalls echoing along the corridors. The rooms were furnished with such spindle-legged chairs and tables that the vigorous Scotch girl feared to touch them. The hall had its complement of portraits; courtiers who frowned upon this degenerate descendant of the golden hair and blue eyes, seemingly impatient of her intrusion. Yet here was the one central point from which raged hours of entertainment. The old servant Robert, who boasted of forbears who had followed the first Leroux from Paris to the backwoods of Canada, this Robert was charged with stories of the heroic past. Nothing, not even Madame la Marquise, who represented Royalty to him, could have detached him from his loyal service to the family. He might disagree with his

ruler, but not in open revolt, and in a measure he too was ruler ; of peasant origin, he inherited the trait of cunning by means of which he gained his ends when Madame was not accessible to reason. He loved Néonie at first for the sake of her mother, whose runaway marriage he had promoted (to her undying gratitude), but ere long he would have laid down his life for the sweet Scotch lassie, who had walked blindfold into a very network of traps laid by a cruel foe. Néonie soon found that Robert was a powerful friend ; any hour of liberty which she enjoyed was due to Robert's clever contrivance ; even these rays of entertainment in the halls of the ancestors.

"Mademoiselle should know the history of her forefathers," was Robert's stolid reply, when Madame rebuked his prolixity. Néonie began to rely on the old servant in every crisis that befell her.

Crises were of frequent occurrence. Grandmère's temper was explosive, brooked no opposition ; reason she abhorred. Robert as a protective personality intervened in that breach which yawned between the high-spirited Scotch maid and the violent old French woman.

"Mademoiselle should be more patient," Robert would remark as he found opportunity. "True, Madame is extreme, but there is much to try her. All whom she has loved have disappointed her wishes ; even the young Seigneur."

"My cousin Raoul, her great-grandson," said Néonie. "What is he like, Robert ?"

"Ah ! Mademoiselle needs but to look at the portrait of the Leroux hero, Raoul, to see the young Seigneur in his fierce moods."

"Fierce ! What a dreadful family !" laughed Néonie.

"Mademoiselle is right ; it is a terrible inheritance the Leroux temper. Did I not see a flash of it a moment ago in Mademoiselle's own blue eyes. Blue or black, what matters it ! the strain of the family curse is there. Our young Seigneur is of course the true heir to the Seigneurie, but Madame by the French law has absolute control of the estate ; she can will it as she desires."

"How did *he* fall from grace," asked Néonie ; "and was she very fond of him ?"

"Madame adored him ; he was of the old race, and to a certain point complacent to her will. But though he had so many characteristics of the old Leroux family, he inherited also from his mother's side, and that, Mademoiselle, was of Huguenot origin."

"This is interesting," said Néonie, scenting war ; "pray continue, Robert."

"The young Seigneur was carefully taught by the great Father Rocher, who is noted, Mademoiselle, for his skill in governing the hearts of young people. And yet M. Raoul overthrew his rulers. Ah ! what an hour was that ! He stood there, Mademoiselle, with his back to the door, and dared them both. Laughed at the threat of disinheritance, threw epithets like hail at the Catholic Church,

said he would live and die worthy the noblest of his ancestors, one Gabriel Morice who was burned at the stake; and walked out bare-headed into the storm, the world without. Ah! what a life was his, but, Mademoiselle, it is crowned with honour. Some friend of his lent him a small sum of money."

"Robert, it was you!" cried Néonie, merrily.

"He went to Paris, Berlin, London. He returned with diplomas, medals; what not! and though he could make a fortune as specialist in cities, he settles here in this small village, and works amongst the poor, trying to free them from the power of the Church which binds them hand and foot."

"Ah! Robert, I suspect you too are a heretic!" cried Néonie.

Robert's stolid face did not change.

"Mademoiselle now perceives the situation. Madame has no heir. She remembers, perhaps forgives——" Robert made a violent effort to swallow, evidently the supposition choked him, "the grand-daughter whose marriage in opposition to her own previous arrangement gave her such a blow. She sends for you; you will inherit the Leroux millions."

"Never," said Néonie. "She hates me. You know she hates me, Robert."

But Robert glided into his pantry, and Madame as she descended the stairs, saw Néonie attentively gazing into the face of the hero, Raoul.

"Ah!" observed the old lady. "The saint of the family. He died in the block house yonder defending the women and children from the enemy, the Iroquois Indians."

"A saint, a fierce-looking saint," cried Néonie, "But the eyes are superb. I am sure people loved him."

Madame's eyes flashed, the girl had thrust a sword through her heart.

"Yes, such men are loved," she said grimly. "Alas! for foolish women."

"It is not foolish to love," said Néonie, throwing down the gauntlet with the superb ignorance of youth.

Madame laughed; her dark eyes swept contemptuously over the fair maid's calm face.

"Love is a fire," she said intensely. "It eats to the core with undying power. It is a pain, an anguish; it lives on food that turns it into one stream with hate. It runs the same course, and cuts itself adrift from peace and repose." She paused, glared at Néonie fiercely, and then said—"Such love *you* will never know. There is no fire in your pulses."

Néonie's answer was interrupted by Robert, who solemnly entered for orders. He beckoned the girl as he left the room.

"It is so bright to-day, and Father Rocher is coming; he will entertain Madame; Mademoiselle might go to the Post Office."

Néonie did not see the anxious look which grew on Robert's face as she gaily set forth on her walk.

"The young Seigneur is right," said he to himself, "she ought not to be here. What does Father Rocher mean by this sudden complaisance to Madame after years of opposition?"

II.

NÉONIE found a letter from home to reward her for her walk, and as it was still early, she rambled about the woods on her return. It was early in June, and the ferns and flowers were springing up under her feet, canaries flashed in the sunlight, robins sang, wild doves cooed, and frogs croaked in the swamps. Nature was racing to achieve her summer miracles after the winter frosts and snows. Forgetful of all, save her intense enjoyment, Néonie followed the winding forest paths, singing in a clear high voice all the Scotch lilt she could think of to keep herself company.

Tired at last she seated herself on a fallen tree, and began to arrange her hat, filled with ferns and flowers which, slung on her arm, had formed a convenient basket; this accomplished, she rose to go home, but found she had lost all sense of direction. Several winding tracks crossed and recrossed, but whichever she took led her back to one central point. Néonie realised she had lost her way; but accepted the situation calmly, without any conception of the difficulty there might be of rescue from her present perplexities. But ere she had time to exhaust herself with fresh efforts, the bushes were pushed aside by a vigorous hand, and a man leading a horse came into the small clearing where Néonie sat waiting light on her path.

The new-comer as he stood, hat in hand, before the girl was no stranger to her; feature by feature was familiar, even the dark soft eyes and wealth of softly curling hair.

"Raoul," she said, with a smile of delight, for she was clannish to a degree. "My cousin Raoul, is it not?"

"Of course," said the new-comer, with a bow worthy of Madame's training, "and you, I know from our mutual friend Robert, you are my cousin Néonie; you have been roaming through the woods and have lost your way, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Yes," said Néonie tranquilly, "but after all I am not far from a house; I saw a large black dog over there just now. I called to him but he did not come."

Raoul gave a quick glance round, and a swift comprehensive look into the sweet face before him.

"It is mid-day," said he, "and Madame takes lunch at half-past one. We have just time to reach the Seigneurie. Shall we start?"

"Oh, yes!" said Néonie, anxiously, "she does not like to be kept waiting."

A curious smile framed the lips of the young Seigneur; but the

eyes that met Néonie's were beaming with kindness. Néonie felt strangely drawn to him.

"How true it is," thought she. "Blood is thicker than water. I feel as though I had known him all my life."

Raoul talked to her of her home in Scotland; and as she related with enthusiasm even the smallest incidents of the uneventful life in the old world, he studied the fair speaker, and made up his mind as to his own course of action.

"Cousin Néonie," he said, "we must meet again; soon I hope. See, there is the Seigneurie gate. But, let me suggest that you take the law into your own hands, and return to the peaceful home you describe without delay."

Néonie was astonished into absolute silence.

"You are too young, and, pardon me, too ignorant, to understand what is patent to Robert and myself. You are in the hands of a dangerous enemy."

"Do you mean Grandmère?"

He paused, reflected a moment, then continued—

"Grandmère alone would not necessitate decisive action on your part; it is not for me to judge on that score; but Grandmère is backed by a most subtle and dangerous foe to your happiness, Father Rocher."

"Father Rocher!" cried Néonie; "oh, cousin Raoul, how unjust you are. He comes often and is so kind; just the opposite of all I ever imagined a priest to be."

Raoul looked into the innocent face with despair of making her understand the subtleties of the danger in which she stood.

"You do not believe me, I see," said he, "and yet— Little cousin, Father Rocher is a Jesuit. I grant you a most charming man. He loves me, his pupil, I am convinced more than aught on earth—except Mother Church. You do not know what that *except* means. His marvellous power over human hearts, which once absorbed every pulsation of my own young heart, who should know better than I—I who was once his bond-slave."

"Ah!" said Néonie, easily. "You are afraid he will influence my religious views. He cannot, you know; I am a Presbyterian."

The statement so simply made was not without force. Raoul saw a flash in the blue eye indicative of staying power, of resistance he would not have credited to so fair a flower.

"If you resist Father Rocher you will learn something of his strength."

"You resisted him!"

"I am a man. Yes, I defied him. I was a slave and I broke my chains and stand under heaven to-day a freed man. But you, you are so ignorant, so guileless."

"Oh, I shall defy them too. Grandmère and I have had pitched battles already."

"Robert tells me so."

"Does he tell you everything?"

"Since you have been in the Seigneurie, yes. He and I are leagued together to keep you safe from your foes if we can."

"If."

"We know the length of Father Rocher's arm; you do not."

The town bell rang the hour.

"I must run," said Néonie, "or I shall be late."

Raoul took both her hands and held them close. "If you knew how reluctant I am to let you go," said he. "Why did they let you come over?"

"Oh, mother was so pleased to think the breach between her and Grandmère was healed; and it is not much to spare her just one year, you know."

"If you only knew!" was all Raoul's reply; but Néonie by this time was swiftly running towards the house and did not hear.

* * * * *

The charming Father Rocher paid daily visits to the Seigneurie; Madame complained that Néonie's French was execrable, and the Reverend Father volunteered to give her lessons. During the course of these lessons there was always time given to desultory conversation, and without knowing why, Néonie found herself always the speaker. She informed the Reverend Father, who was always so modest in expressing his own opinion, on several points. She held views as do most young people, and was very sure of her premises; and yet, how curious it was that though Father Rocher never contradicted her, or in any way argued with her, he had by adroit questioning led her to see that she contradicted herself, that her basis for argument was cut away from under her feet, that she was on questionable ground, where she believed herself to stand on rock.

"Clear as a crystal stream, yet not without force," was the verdict.

"One so young and so eager for sympathy should not be difficult to manage—well isolated. It was a *contretemps*, that meeting with Raoul, and must not occur again."

How did he know that Néonie had met Raoul?

In the blush that flitted over the girl's face, as Madame exclaimed at finding her studying the pictured face in the hall, the all-pervading sense of the Jesuit read a personal interest.

"The portrait would pass for that of Raoul, the present young Seigneur," said he, *sotto voce* to Néonie.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed, "the expression is so different." Then she paused. The Jesuit apparently took no notice of her betrayal. Had he not heard? He had stooped to disengage Madame's train from an imaginary nail.

"What we have to do," said he, that night, "must not be delayed."

* * * * *

An epidemic of small-pox broke out in the village, and made it

impossible for Raoul, who was working night and day for the ignorant poor, to see more of his little cousin. He dared not even write to her for fear of conveying infection; but he sent her frequent messages by the faithful Robert. Néonie's walks were restricted to the woods immediately around the house, but during the intense heat of those summer days, she only cared to sit beneath the shade of the grand forest oaks, and read or dream of home and—Raoul.

The personality of Raoul became as an all-pervading power over her gentle soul; perhaps he intended it should be so to counter-balance, if possible, the many-headed hydra which was clutching at the girl's vitality, narrowing her outlook, absorbing her strength. Madame smiled in a strangely sinister manner as Néonie was caught in one after another of the wide meshes of Father Rocher's net. She was already tasting revenge on the heretic grand-daughter, who had fled her roof with the Scotchman. Did they think she had forgotten or forgiven? She had cursed them, that morning when the flight was known, but the delinquents had been happy in spite of that curse. Now! she could grind them under her heel, they should suffer through this blue-eyed maid, whose fair beauty, suggesting her Scotch descent, made her hateful in Madame's eyes.

One afternoon Néonie sat beneath her favourite tree, alone in the forest. Her eyes were on the French lesson, but her thoughts so far away, that the softly-breathed "Néonie" scarcely broke the rhythm of her dream.

"Néonie, little cousin."

She sprang up then and looked round. Raoul stood well in the shade of a neighbouring pine, his eyes smiling at the welcome in the surprised face turned towards him.

"No, not a step nearer," he said, "we must be content to see and speak to one another."

"Robert brings me a message from you every day," said Néonie. "He is so good——"

"Yes, Robert would die for me," said Raoul, quietly, or for one—I love."

Néonie's heart beat fast, the colour swept her cheeks leaving her pale by contrast.

"Tell me, do you think of me sometimes," said he, bending forward. "No, do not turn away from me, it has been so hard for me to keep away so long. My only comfort has been to send you messages day by day—poor comfort."

"Are the poor people getting well?"

"The plague is burning itself out; it is hard to govern slaves in a crisis. These poor "habitants" are slaves of the Church; superstitious and ignorant beyond belief. Father Rocher and I have had a battle-royal, but I am backed by government now as to vaccination. He has learned again that Raoul Leroux is a free man, and he begins to measure my sword arm accurately. And now for yourself.

The net is drawing close about you. You do not realise the power of the Church in this country ; that ere you could get help from home, you could be so disposed of, that none of your relatives would ever get the faintest clue as to your whereabouts."

Néonie smiled.

"Really, cousin Raoul," she said, "that would be tragedy ; tragedy in the backwoods !" and her merry laugh rippled in the forest air like music.

"Do you believe in fate, little cousin ?" said Raoul very softly, as though he feared the wind might carry his words to listening ears.

'Do you believe in love at first sight ; do you believe that two souls meeting for the first time might find such mutual joy that they would never be content again without this newly-found sympathy which floods the life with love."

"Is that a catechism ?" asked Néonie, shyly.

"Little Jesuit, do you think I shall accept that for an answer ?" said Raoul, his dark eyes full of light. "Néonie, your sweet eyes tell me what I want to know. You are not indifferent to your cousin Raoul."

"Indifferent ! oh, no !" said Néonie.

"Néonie, I had a letter from your father this morning in answer to my own. He is now on his way out here, but until he comes he gives me the right to protect you from your enemies."

"My father is coming !" cried Néonie. "Oh, Raoul, you dear, good Raoul !"

Tears of joy filled her eyes, and she sprang across the intervening space to her cousin's side.

"Back, darling ! Indeed, you must not come so near," said Raoul tenderly. "And now I see Father Rocher in the distance. He must not find out this news, which will check-mate his little plans so perfectly. Go now, dear Néonie, to meet him ; meet guile with guile, and be silent as death too, as to our meeting here in the woods."

"Do not fear," said Néonie. "Oh, I don't mind anything now that my father is coming."

There was a softly breathed "*Adieu, little cousin ; prenez garde, ie vous prie,*" and Raoul had noiselessly disappeared.

"Meet guile with guile," Raoul had said. Néonie at once made her little effort. She pulled her hat over her eyes, leaned against the trunk of the tree well in shadow and feigned sleep. The Jesuit came and went, making sufficient noise to have wakened the girl had she really been asleep. Néonie congratulated herself on her success in hoodwinking the priest : he went away smiling at the transparent fraud. "She has seen Raoul in the woods," said he to Grandmère, "and now, Madame, a word in your ear."

How did it happen ? One by one restrictions on her liberty crept in and galled the high-spirited maid beyond endurance. Néonie

began to learn that the courteous charming Father Rocher had a strong arm. He exacted much from her in her studies, and from his word was no appeal. Pressure was brought to bear upon her observance of the rites of the Church; a portion of the study hour was set aside for instruction in the Catholic faith. How long could this young girl stand against such heavy odds? asked the Jesuit of his experience.

"To the death," was Néonie's staunch reply to this question, as it rose to her lips that very night.

She knelt by the open window, her white face raised to the blue heavens where the regnant moon glided, o'ershadowing the stars. How still and calm was the forest world without! was it possible that wild animals lurked in the shadows? Néonie shivered with dread, conscious that the enemy she was fighting single-handed was more to be dreaded than the foes without. In that moment she formed her resolution, she would openly defy Madame, and then leave her house for ever.

"You think you will convert me," said she quietly to Father Rocher, next day. "I tell you, never, never! I scorn the falseness, the degrading errors of your faith."

The priest merely smiled in an indulgent manner, but Madame was white with fury.

"You need not trouble to teach me anything more," she continued, "for I have made up my mind to return home."

Then with a curtsy which included the subtle priest and the enraged old woman, Néonie calmly left the room, and went upstairs to pack her trunks.

"Raoul need not have been afraid for me," she said to herself. "They accepted my decision quite quietly, there is nothing like being firm."

Poor ignorant Néonie!

Perhaps no one understood what Madame's *white* wrath meant so well as Robert. He crept to Néonie's door after an hour spent with his ear to the keyhole of Madame's boudoir.

"Mademoiselle must fly to-night," said he. "To-morrow it will be too late. No, do not speak. Listen! The block house door is open, a ladder communicates with the upper storey. I shall place it there; you will hide in the dark there until I can communicate with Monsieur Raoul. When I give the signal, so (he tapped on the door) Mademoiselle will creep down to the salon. The window will be open, the path to the block house unobstructed."

Ere Néonie could reply Robert had made one of his mysterious disappearances. The expression of his face startled the courageous girl into something like fear. What did he dread for her? She had defied her enemies and surely could use her own pleasure in turning her back on the inhospitable doors of the Seigneurie, where she, a stranger, had been obliged to endure so much repression.

She did not like to leave the house, though, in the secret manner suggested by Robert, and yet Raoul had told her most emphatically to follow the advice of the faithful old servant in every particular.

When the dinner-bell sounded, Néonie obeyed its summons without delay. Madame treated her with more than usual ceremonial politeness; her black eyes blazed like living coals in her withered white face, otherwise there was no change in the regular order of events.

"You see, Robert," Néonie whispered as she met him on her way through the hall, "I have frightened Father Rocher away, and taught Madame a lesson. I am master now of the situation. They will oppress me no more."

Robert turned pitying eyes on the ignorant child, who was so utterly unable to gauge the power of those into whose hands she had fallen.

"Mademoiselle, believe me, you are in great danger! Once before have I seen Madame white, silent with rage. I know what it means!" He shrugged his shoulders and gesticulated with his hands.

Néonie went to her room, resolved to take the course the faithful old servant indicated.

The evening passed quietly. Madame retired to rest early; the coast was clear ere the clock chimed ten. Robert's signal was delayed another hour, however, and Néonie, throwing a shawl over her head, crept downstairs and out at the parlour window. She took a long breath as she stood under the stars, and then set forth swiftly down the path to the old block house. This path was very narrow and overgrown with tangled vines; Robert, however, had cleared the worst obstructions away, and Néonie ran hastily forwards.

Suddenly the way was blocked. She stood and faced her enemy, who, without one word slowly advanced upon her. She retreated still facing him, as though had she turned her back, like a wild beast he would have darted upon her. How long it took to reach the house she could not know, for the seconds dragged like hours. She was afraid, mortally afraid of this silent foe, and yet faced him with a courage surely inherited from warrior ancestors, who never turned their backs on danger. The window was reached, it opened like a door, and the relative position of the pair was not altered as Néonie entered the house.

At the foot of the stairs, however, the enemy paused, simply pointing upwards with one hand sternly outstretched. With slow lingering step Néonie obeyed; and breathless with terror and horror, as though the coils of a snake were crushing the life out of her, she threw up her window, and gazed helplessly into the silent forest. Where was Raoul?

The clock in the village struck the midnight hour. Néonie, scarcely knowing what might happen, threw herself dressed on her bed, and fell at length into a feverish slumber.

She was awakened by the feeling that she was not alone in the room. She sprang up alertly, and called in challenging tones—

"Who is there?"

A personality, a Medusa-like presence draped in black garments, came from the shadows and stood silently before the girl.

"Who and what are you," cried she. "Speak!"

There was an amused laugh from the doorway, and Madame's voice explained the presence of the new-comer.

"This, Néonie, is Sister Angela from the lunatic asylum across the river. She has taken the vow of silence, so she will not be an intrusive companion. Sister Angela is summoned to take charge of you, since you defy your proper guardians, for the one week which Father Rocher, with misjudged indulgence, insists you shall have for reflection."

"I agree with you, it is misjudged," said Néonie boldly. "I shall return at once, without delay to my parents. It is daylight now, and I know my way well to the village. You cannot keep me if I choose to go."

Again Madame laughed. Néonie shivered at its cruel ring.

"We cannot hold you. Good! Try your strength on Sister Angela; she is accustomed to control lunatics. Enough! You will reflect, my bold child. For a week's time you will permit Father Rocher to prepare you for confirmation. In that case I forgive all, and you will be heiress to the accumulated wealth of the Leroux estate, which Raoul, apostate, has forfeited."

"And if I refuse?" said Néonie, her courage rising.

Madame pointed to Sister Angela.

"From the portals of that asylum which she represents there is no escape. You will be carried thither under an assumed name; dead for ever to the world without. No bird whispers secrets from out those padded walls. You, Néonie McFee, will be dead! dead!"

Madame's voice sank to a fierce whisper, more terrible than the keenest outcry; she vanished, locking the door on the outside, and Néonie was left at the mercy of the sinister stranger.

The blood of the young girl was up; she was no recreant to her race; even the stolid woman watching read power in the courageous young creature's attitude as she faced round upon her.

"Sit down," commanded Néonie; "and as I cannot possibly vanish through walls or locked doors, you can take your eyes off me for a time."

Sister Angela placed her chair where she commanded a view of the whole room, with the window on one side of her and the door at the other. Not a bird or squirrel could move in the trees without but she could see them.

Néonie went to work feverishly to set her trunk in order. She packed and repacked, lovingly handling the familiar objects she had brought from home, absorbing herself in the photographs of her

family, reading her home letters, trying in one way after another to forget her terrible position. And all this time Sister Angela stared at her with her watchful, sly eyes. But for the links she held in her hand of her dear home, Néonie felt that she must have lost her reason.

At mid-day Madame opened the door. Robert entered bearing a tray on which stood a cup and plate. Only a clever physiognomist could have read with appreciation of its power as a mask, the indifferent, dull expression on the old servant's fat, expressionless face. He set the tray down without a glance at Néonie, stepped away, then turning at the door, made a gesture of annoyance—the tray was crooked. He simply walked back to the table and set it straight, but Néonie knew she should find something under the cover.

Sister Angela was sent downstairs to take her *déjeuner*. Madame locked her prisoner's door. Néonie, left alone, feverishly snatched a tiny slip of paper from its hiding-place.

"At midnight.—*RAOUL*."

She hid the paper just in time. Sister Angela had swallowed her bouillon with despatch, and now took her seat and her watch again.

Néonie went slowly, deliberately on with her dinner. Robert served her with the usual meagre amount of food in the usual courses. With hope of relief so near, Néonie's eyes shone; her expression was almost gleeful.

"Ah, *prenez garde!* the plate is warm, mademoiselle," said Robert quietly.

Néonie knew that he meant to convey a warning to her, and as soon as dinner was over took a book and feigned to read.

The hours dragged past; but for Raoul's written word Néonie must have given way to violent screaming, so unendurable was this black-gowned presence, so horrible the glare of the stealthy cat-like eyes. The village clock rang out the afternoon hours; the shadows stretched across the garden; it was sundown, then dusk. Néonie lighted her lamp, and continued to read. Nine o'clock struck. Robert glided into the room. Néonie detected an anxious expression in his eyes; his voice was scarcely as clear as usual.

"Madame sends Sister Angela a cup of coffee to assist her to keep awake to-night," said he, bowing low before the *religieuse*.

Sister Angela took the offered luxury with greediness. Robert advanced to the table as she drank it to the dregs. Then he turned down the lamp so that the room was almost dark.

"Pardon, mademoiselle, the lamp flares. I must bring you a better one."

But he did not return. Madame locked the door as she passed upstairs, called a shrill "Good-night!" to Sister Angela, and carried away the key in her pocket, Sister Angela of course did not reply.

The house was very silent. Néonie, expectant of she did not quite know what, put out the light, and sat motionless in her chair. The

moon shone into the room, striking full on the figure of Sister Angela. The staring eyes were still directed on the prisoner, but surely unseeing, for the heavy mouth had fallen open, the wide chest was rising and falling in stertorous breathing. It was Néonie's turn to watch; she had now the clue. Sister Angela's head fell back; she snored loud and long. Néonie was free at last of the glare of those dreadful eyes.

Ten! eleven! twelve! How sweet and full the slow, reverberant tones that stirred the silent night hour with rhythmic power! Was that a movement in the tree by her window? Néonie softly raised the sash and looked out. Two dark forms appeared under the tree carrying a ladder. As soon as this was safely placed against her window, one of the figures climbed up and softly said, "Come!"

Néonie could not see the face of the speaker, though she felt the familiar touch thrill to her heart with wild delight; but she obeyed without a moment's delay, and at the foot of the ladder sprang into the outstretched arms with indescribable rapture.

"Father, oh my father!" she cried, clinging close about his neck.

"Yes," said Raoul, "and only just in time to help me steal a march upon our enemies."

"Here is Mademoiselle's hat," said Robert's unmoved voice. "I suspected she might forget it."

* * * * *

There is but one thing further to tell, and this little matter took place just two years later. Raoul was on the eve of setting out on his journey to Scotland to consummate a life-long bond with his little cousin Néonie, when Robert came to him post-haste from Madame.

"Madame is dying. She insists that she must see you," said the faithful old servant.

Raoul obeyed the summons. Madame was all but speechless; a notary had been summoned to take down her last wishes. As Raoul entered the room, the old woman beckoned him to come to her.

"Raoul," she suddenly cried, "Raoul, I love you; more than my life or—my Church! Monsieur"—she turned calmly to the notary—"I am in full possession of my senses. I leave everything I possess without reservation to my great-grandson, Raoul de Leroux."

These were her last words. She held out her arms to the young man, who, stooping, kissed her, and laid her head back on the pillow, sleeping in death.



A NARRATIVE OF GOLDEN ROW.

YES, ma'am, me and my boy lives here : no, he ain't my son, he's my husband. You see, I calls him 'my boy,' 'cause I've known him from a child : his mother was a friend of mine, and one of the best women ever stepped. I'm fifteen years older than him, and that's a fact. When I was living general at Dr. Elliott's, in the square, he was errand boy, and so I come to visit his mother through a bit o' dressmaking ; bimeby it come to my stopping at their place whenever I was out of situation. You see I hadn't nobody in the world belonging to me, and her husband was a very light man through attending evening parties and such-like : a handsome man too, as had been a butler, in good families too, but I always say they're the worst, if you come to that.

"So, you see, I'd had a hand like in bringing my boy up ; and no sooner was the breath out of his poor mother's body, than his father took and put up the banns with the young person as had made all the mischief ; a widow she called herself, and a widow bewitched, I'll allow, with her hair cut in what they call a monkey frill, saving the expression, ma'am. No sooner said than done ; she wasn't likely to let him slip through her fingers, and they was man and wife one Sunday morning seven weeks after : my boy, he comes to me with the tears on his cheeks and says, 'There ain't nobody to think of poor mother now, but you and me, Fanny ; and who's to look after me, I can't say, now she's gone and my home with her.'

"All of a sudden it came over me to speak : I couldn't let my poor boy stand all alone, and no one to see to him ; so I says, 'Well,' I says, 'if you feel that way and ain't got no further plans, I'll take and do for you for better for worse, for richer for poorer'—and with that I stopped dead short, for he was staring at me like anything, and I suppose my face was a bit red.

"'D'ye mean it?' he says quite short and sharp like a man, though he was only nineteen.

"'I do, please God.'

"'Go to church?' says he, getting a bit red too, and twisting his waistcoat button.

"'Just that.'

"'Done!' he says, so shy like, he couldn't scarcely look at me ; and so we was married directly, as you may say ; for it was a Thursday evening I spoke to him, an' Fridays the gentleman sits at the vestry to take the banns, and allowin' for being called three times, we was married on the Monday, was a fortnight. There wasn't nothing to wait for, for I hadn't got nobody to tell, being out of a situation at the time ; and he was his own master, his father having moved down to

Clacton-on-Sea with the widow, and sold up all their bits of sticks ; all except what my boy had collared, the day his mother was buried, which was her own, and she left them to him written down, and signed by the landlady.

"So I moved into the room in Golden Row, where his mother had been ; this very room as we're a-setting in ; and I assure you, ma'am, I missed her every day.

"There was one thing I kept to myself ; it was the only secret ever I had. I had a few pounds in the post-office—not much, for you can't save much off a general ; it ain't like house and parlours, that come in for tips from staying company, and whistling cabs, and so on ; but a pound or two against a rainy day. Mrs. Schroff, at the shop, she says to me, 'Well,' she says, 'Fanny, so I hear you've got a young beau ! I doubt but he's seen you coming in and out here with your savings book ; 'tain't likely a smart young fellow'd take up with you without,' she says ; she's a very plainspoken woman, Mrs. Schroff is. Well, I'd known my boy from a child, but I thought there was no harm being on the safe side, so I just kept my tongue between my teeth about my savings book : he was in good work with a builder at the time, twenty-two shillings a week, and every penny of it brought home ; and I thought if there comes illness bimeby, or maybe a baby, it's mine, and I shan't have to come upon him for anything. If you'll believe me, ma'am, a year slipped by without our having so much as a word, let alone an unpleasantness ; my boy told me they laughed at him, up at the shop, about marrying his grandmother ; 'but,' says he, 'I tell 'em there ain't many of their wives makes them as comfortable as you do me ! They'd like to taste your welsh rabbit, Fanny,' he says, 'but I'll grandmother 'em afore they shall !' and there wasn't a man in the Row went out as neat, or come home so steady as mine.

"Whatever made Mrs. Schroff begin about it I can't say : I was feeling a bit down one afternoon, and went into the shop more for a chat than anything, though I always had my bread off her, and passed the time of day, without being what you'd call one to make many friends, which I never was. There wasn't nobody in the shop but our two selves, and she begun at once. 'So you've got your mother-in-law back, Mrs. Bollit,' watching me all the time to see how I'd take it.

"'Seems like it,' I says ; I wasn't goin' to let her see I didn't know.

"'I see her talking to your husband last night,' she goes on, 'her and that young sister of hers, the red-haired one ; blue velvet she was dressed in, and a feather boar ; an' to see that gurl goin' on with Bollit was a thing I shouldn't have cared for, supposing Schroff to 'a' been twenty years younger nor me, and had his hearing which, of course, being a foreigner don't so much matter in his case.'

"I can't tell you, ma'am, how I felt at her words, but I wasn't going to let her notice nothing. 'As for that, Mrs. Schroff,' I says,

'we're all related, you see, and my husband is free to talk to his mother-in-law's sister as long as he pleases. Marriage is respected,' I says, 'among Englishmen more than it is among the French and the Germans, as I understand'—I was all in a tremble as I says it—'whatever age they be!'

"Free! I should think he was free,' she goes on with a laugh.

"And I'll trouble you to give me half of a French roll to make up the ounce an' three-quarters that was a-wanting on Monday's loaf,' I says; and I just took it, and threw down the money, and marched out of the shop.

"All that evening I was miserable. It wasn't altogether that I doubted my boy, but them poisonous words kept getting between me and my better judgment; however, I says nothing an' he says nothing. Next day was Saturday, and he brings me the money as usual, only seventeen and sixpence, five shillings short.

"Not on winter terms a'ready?' I asks as cheerful as I can muster, for when the frost comes, builders' wages goes down: all the same I knew there hadn't been no frost, and what Mrs. Schroff said about a feather boar, nasty dirty fly-away things, full o' fleas, come right into my head!

"No,' he says hesitating, 'but that's all I've got this week—fact is, Fanny, I was owing five shillings to a friend, and you must manage this time without it!' he went twisting his weskit-button all the while, same as I've known him do when Dr. Elliott used to find fault with him about the medicine bottles.

"All right,' was all my answer. I couldn't bear to see him acting before me like a child that's afraid he'll be scolded, but I was dreadful unhappy, and couldn't speak all the evening, and when I'd cried myself to sleep I dreamt of a big snake in the waterbutt, with a feather boar for a tail, and a red fringe. But he slep' quiet enough, just like a child. Well, this went on for weeks, and every Saturday he give me his money five shillings short; he'd left off saying he owed a friend, and I just took it without a word, for words had got scarce between us two. He was away often and didn't come home same as he used to; I got mopy, and would set by the hour thinking of the baby that was coming and saying to myself as you can't expect codlins off a crab; Bollits was bad, father and son, and my child wouldn't be likely to be any better than what he come of.

"Well, ma'am, this was how it was one-afternoon when there come a telegraft-boy to the door.

"Bollit live here?' says he; and through me being in the passage I heard him, and calls out, 'Bollit ain't at home!'

"Then you'd better see to this,' he says, and he gives me the envelope.

"You read it,' I says, for it was just 'Bollit, Bollit, Bollit,' swimming before my eyes. The boy was civil enough, and read it out slowly, seeing I was all of a tremble.

" "Bollit, 5 Golden Row. East. Bollit run over come immediately London Hospital : " that's all," he says. 'You'd better hurry along, missus, for it was given in at 2.41, and it's past four now—there's a lot o' business doing at this time of the afternoon.' Somehow I got to the hospital—I don't know how. Mrs. Tangye, that's my landlady—that had known me for years, and my boy's mother too, she put on her bonnet and came along with me—washing-day and all—'for you ain't in no condition to go alone, my dear, and it 'ud be hard on one that's coming if he should lose father *and* mother before he was born !'

"All the way along, Mrs. Tangye she kept wondering how he come to be run over, and if it was in the dinner hour, and whether it wasn't a mistake was put in the telegraph, and in reality he'd fell off a ladder, which was more natural in the building trade. I didn't answer nothing, and so we got to the hospital, and up the steps, and the porter looks in his book and says, 'Ah, yes, Bollit—in the accident ward—run over by a Pickford's van—this way, ladies, if you please.'

"We went up some stone stairs, and through some passages, and at one corner I see some young gentlemen, no older than Bollit himself, all laughing together over a piece of paper ; then at the door of the ward a young lady comes out and a middle-aged gentleman and asks, 'Are you Mrs. Bollit ?'

" 'Yes, sir, this is Mrs. Bollit, sir,' Mrs. Tangye answers, and I hears her voice sounding away in the distance, so to speak, though she was close beside me, and had me by the arm ; 'if so be she's too late, miss, and the poor fellow's gone, you'll tell her gently'—and the young lady in the cap and apron, she comes round to the other side of me and says, 'The poor man was in great pain and suffering when they brought him here ; he could hardly give his name and address, but now he is at peace and rest—we mustn't wish him back again.'

" 'No, miss, I understand,' and curiously enough there was my voice too, coming from all across the road, as it were ; 'we mustn't wish him back ; and please, may I go to my boy, miss ?'

"The young lady looked at Mrs. Tangye. 'Does she want to go home, do you think ?' she asks ; but Mrs. Tangye says, 'That's what she always calls him, poor dear,' and the young lady looks at me again ; 'No,' I says, 'I ain't goin' to faint ; I never do, miss,' and with that, one on each side of me, they leads me up to the bed behind the screen.

"The elderly gentleman, he turned back the sheet, and there lay—oh, not my boy, but his father !

"Mrs. Tangye took me home—the gentleman paid for a four-wheel cab all the way back to our place : my boy wasn't in yet, and just as well ; for what with the shock and the rush, I was taken ill, and before nine o'clock it was all over with my poor baby. But I lay there, while Mrs. Tangye tidied about, and somehow I wasn't so unhappy about it as I felt I oughter been, for I'd still got my boy as was alive and well, after all.

"And when I woke in the night, there he was in the chair by the fire, sound asleep, setting up with me !

"Next morning, Mrs. Tangye had told him all, and the first thing he says, 'Poor old dad,' he says ; 'now you knows, Fanny, where that five shillings a week went to. He came to the yard one day, weeks back now, and he tells me he went in fear of his life of that woman and her sister. I give him what I could ; and they was at me next day to know where he was a-hidin', and how much I should allow him a-week, for Mrs. Schroff at the post office, 'ad told him I'd married a rich woman, and hadn't no right to see my father come on the parish. Somehow I didn't name it to you, for I was ashamed-like after I'd seen dad, and the state he was brought to through those two sluts, and you keeping house so tidy and comfortable for me. I used to get dad to meet me and give him my dinner, and the money, and put the women off the scent of where he was stopping, if they came bothering after me ; but I told dad if he called at our house, there'd be an end of any help I might give him, for I wouldn't have my wife messed up with that lot : if I hadn't married a rich woman, I'd married a real good one, I says, and his wife and her sister shouldn't lay their tongues on her.'

"At this I begun to cry, for I was weak-like ; and my boy he cried too, for with all his faults he'd loved his poor father.

"To think he should come to a pauper's funeral, a man that had had his dress suit, and looked like a duke in it in the old days—she'd took and pawned that, and sold his policies too, and let his club drop, so that there wasn't a penny to come upon nowhere to give him anything beyond a parish burying.

"Then I lay and thought, an' presently I says : 'You look in my work-box with the shells on it and the view of Dover Cliffs, and under the lid, where the lining's split a bit, you'll see my savings book. I ain't a rich woman, as Mrs. Schroff said ; but there's a few pounds there as'll give your father a decent funeral—you can take it and welcome.'

"No, ma'am, his wife didn't offer to do nothing—it's my opinion she was main glad to be shot of him, poor old fellow ! She went to the hospital—or sent her sister, I dunno' which—but never asked to view the body or anything respectful ; on'y called for his ring, which was my boy's mother's wedding-ring what he'd kept through thick and thin. She got it too, through leaving word she was his wife and her son would see to the burying. So he did, with my little bit o' money, and when he comes home from the funeral he says ; 'Fanny,' he says ; 'don't you fret over the baby,' he says, 'for we're happy together you and me, and we don't want no third party a-interfering,' he says. I never gave it another thought after that, ma'am, for as long as I've got my boy, I feel I am mother and wife all in one."



A DAY IN A PUBLISHER'S LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A DOUBLE BLUE," ETC.

June 5th, 1892.

"GENTLEMEN,
"We have carefully considered——"

So far I had got in an important letter I had to write to the Firm of Claxton and Underwood, when a whistle from the tube at my side announced that someone was waiting below.

"Yes?" I spoke down the tube.

"Mrs. Cameron wishes to see you, sir."

"Show her up."

Who Mrs. Cameron might be I had no idea, but she was determined that my ignorance on that point should come to an end. She grasped the invariable brown-paper parcel, and took the chair placed for aspiring authors.

"I called about publishing," she said, as if it were probable that she had called about other matters.

"Yes?"

"My husband is an army man," she continued with that tendency to wander from the point which is characteristic of the gentler sex; "or rather he was, and he had to retire when this abominable Bill of Childers' came in, though it wasn't his fault that he was above a certain age."

As she paused I replied—

"It seemed hard in many cases."

"Seemed!" she cried in scorn. "Well, of course, now things are not quite what they were; and there is so little Major Cameron can do at his age, and with the low value of land, and all that, we have to live very quietly."

I looked sympathetic, and wondered when she was coming to the point.

"But we have boys," she continued, "and I am determined they shall go to Eton. To have been an Eton boy is an advantage throughout life."

I said that I had found it so.

"So you were at Eton!" she cried. "How funny! But then people do take up so many things nowadays, even people in society. I wonder if Major Cameron would care to take up publishing."

I gave her no encouragement on this point, so she unfolded her parcel.

"I have written a book," she announced solemnly. "I thought I would earn something, and I believe literature is very paying."

"You would like us to read it, and give you our opinion?"

"Please. I will call any day."

"Thank you. We will write."

"I am often this way," she persisted with the feminine preference for personal interviews.

"It shall have our attention," I said gravely.

"And how much do you think you can give me for it?" said the lady.

"I can offer no opinion on the manuscript till I have read it," I said, "but I will read it if you will kindly leave it."

"Then I suppose there is no good in my waiting now. I do so hope we shall be able to send Rupert to Eton."

Five minutes more were spent in escorting her down, and satisfying her curiosity on the mysteries of a publishing house. Hardly had I returned to my letter when Moffat, my partner, looked in.

"I say, is there much on this morning? My wife's sister is coming up from the country and I want to meet her at Paddington. Can you get on without me?"

"Oh, yes, certainly."

His head vanished.

"We have carefully considered your letter, and——"

A knock at the door.

"Please, sir, Nops' man has called about the blocks."

For three hours my visitors came in an unceasing stream, my letter got no further, and the large pile of manuscript by my side remained untouched.

"At last," I said, having seen out an artless young creature who had called to inquire why her essay on "Friendship" had not been accepted for the *Paternoster Observer*, meeting the formula about want of space with the assurance that she was willing to wait, till I was obliged to tell her in a manner that seemed to her brutal that she had no aptitude for writing.

"A man named Wingfield wants to see you, sir."

The name carried me back to the Eton playing fields, and a famous bowler of my day.

"Show him up."

The man came in with the diffidence of manner that belongs to those who have failed in life. He carried a folio under his arm, and his well-worn coat was shiny and white at the seams; but it was the look in his eyes that arrested my attention—the pitiful look of a dog in pain, which I learnt afterwards told of frequent hunger.

"Someone told me that perhaps you could give me some illustrating to do," he said bluntly. "I have brought some specimens," and he opened his folio.

I was not prepared for the excellent sketches he produced.

"You are an artist?" I said.

"I am anything," he answered shortly.

The fanciful monogram, W. Y. W., in the corner of the sketch I held in my hand brought back old memories like a flash.

"Big Wingfield?" I cried, using the old school nickname.

"Yes, but I don't remember you."

"Latimer."

A sudden smile spread over his face.

"Do you remember," he said, and I fancy that he seldom used this phrase now, "the day we beat Harrow at Lord's?"

"Sit down, old fellow," I said, and we dropped into reminiscences of old days. At last I asked: "Where have you been all this time?"

"To the devil."

We made an arrangement about the illustrations, and I gave him part payment in advance.

"Where are you living?" I asked as he rose to go.

"In Long Lane."

Long Lane! the Eton bowler, the fastidious youth as I remembered him.

I could not immediately turn my attention to my letter, for Wingfield's boyish nonsense was in my mind.

"We have carefully considered your letter, and we are prepared——"

"Miss Vernon, sir."

"Oh, Harry," said my cousin, coming into the room, followed by her sister, "how are you? We have been to the stores, and thought we would look in as we are near, just to see what it looks like to see you here. How funny! but I suppose you don't have much to do."

I failed to see the ludicrous side of the situation, and said that, on the contrary, I was generally busy.

Fanny had ensconced herself in the big chair, and Mary sat on the arm.

"What men call busy," laughed Fanny. "I suppose you keep an eye on the clerks, and just look important."

"On the contrary, most of my time is taken up in listening to loquacious ladies."

"Oh, how funny you are—isn't he, Mary? We've been to the stores, and we saw Helen there. What a sweet thing in hats she has got. I like the shapes this year. Are you going to Lady W——'s to-night?"

"I believe so."

"What does everybody do here, Harry? Do take us round. It is so amusing, and we have a little spare time. We did not come for anything particular, only you see this comes on our way. Why, you've got Dash there. Dash, old fellow, come here. Oh, Harry, do show us what a real book looks like before it is printed."

I endeavoured to satisfy their curiosity on every point, and everything was pronounced, "funny and amusing."

"So kind of you," said Fanny, "but we must go. Won't you come back to luncheon with us?"

"Thank you. I have no time."

"Well, good-bye. I think I could be a publisher now. It seems very simple."

"And we are prepared to agree to your terms——"

The door opened hastily, and my younger brother Gerard looked in.

"Awfully sorry, Harry, but I'm on my way to the club, and I find I've left my money behind. Awfully awkward, don't you know. Would you mind lending me a couple of sovereigns? It's too hot to go back."

Gerard's money was seldom on his person, and this request was not the first of its kind.

"Thanks awfully, won't stay now. Shall see you at Lady W——'s to-night."

——"to agree to your terms for the transfer of stock in hand——"

"Mr. Firth, sir."

"Show him up."

Mr. Firth looked hot and indignant.

"I called to see the editor of the *Paternoster Observer*."

"I am the editor."

"Then, sir," said my visitor, his feelings becoming too much for lucid expression, "what did you mean—what do you think—is it well to publish such dangerous papers as 'Criticism of to-day?' I take your magazine, sir, it lies on my table, it may be taken up by my sons and daughters, and you attack the bulwarks of religion."

"Where?" I said, opening the current number of the magazine, and placing it before him.

"Huxley—Clifford Harrison," said the man, glancing at a few names which he fired off like rockets.

"Yes, read on. You must allow the existence of these men whose names seem to offend you. What does the article say? What is the context?"

A quarter of an hour later Mr. Firth left the room with as near an approach to an apology as I should think he ever made. It was getting late. Should I end my letter in peace, and get through some reading?

"Miss W——wishes to see you, sir."

"Show her up."

She came into the room, a quiet girl with a sweet manner.

"You may know me as *Constance Amherst*," she said simply, and I felt the elation that a publisher must feel when he meets for the first time the latest literary favourite.

"No one would confess to an ignorance of *Constance Amherst*," I said.

"I thought I should like to offer you my new book," she said, "because I like the tone of your publications. People laugh at my ideas, but I think a publisher has his style as much as an author. I think we agree on this point. I must not keep you, for I see that you are busy. A publisher's life is very grand. He does so much to make the world better."

She was looking beyond me with a dreamy expression in her eyes.

"He tries," I said quickly, "but much is trivial and commonplace."

"Not in the motive," she said smiling. "Good-bye—I will leave my MS. Perhaps the people are too ideal."

She left me with her short, decided sentences ringing in my mind, and at last I finished the letter.

Then the door opened, and a gentle step crossed the room.

"Harry!"

I looked up to see my wife.

"I thought you might be ready to drive home with me," she said.

"I am afraid not, dear. It has been a busy day."

She looked at the pile of manuscript by my side, and then at me.

"Tired, Harry?"

"Rather."

She told me what she had been doing, and then said,

"I don't care about going to Lady W——'s to-night unless you are set on it."

"But your new dress——" I began.

"Silly boy, do you think this is the only opportunity I have of wearing it? No, Harry, we'll have a cosy evening. Bring home some of that and read while I play Beethoven. I will not stay now. Come soon."

For the first time I began to see the end of my day's work, and I breathed more freely.

In spite of Constance Amherst, the details of a publisher's life seemed anything but grand, and I was glad at last to wend my way homewards.

"Come gently," said Helen taking my arm, "and see the most beautiful sight in the world," and I stepped softly into the darkened nursery, and bent over a tiny cradle where baby was sleeping.

"He grows more like you every day," she said, and I accepted the flattery.

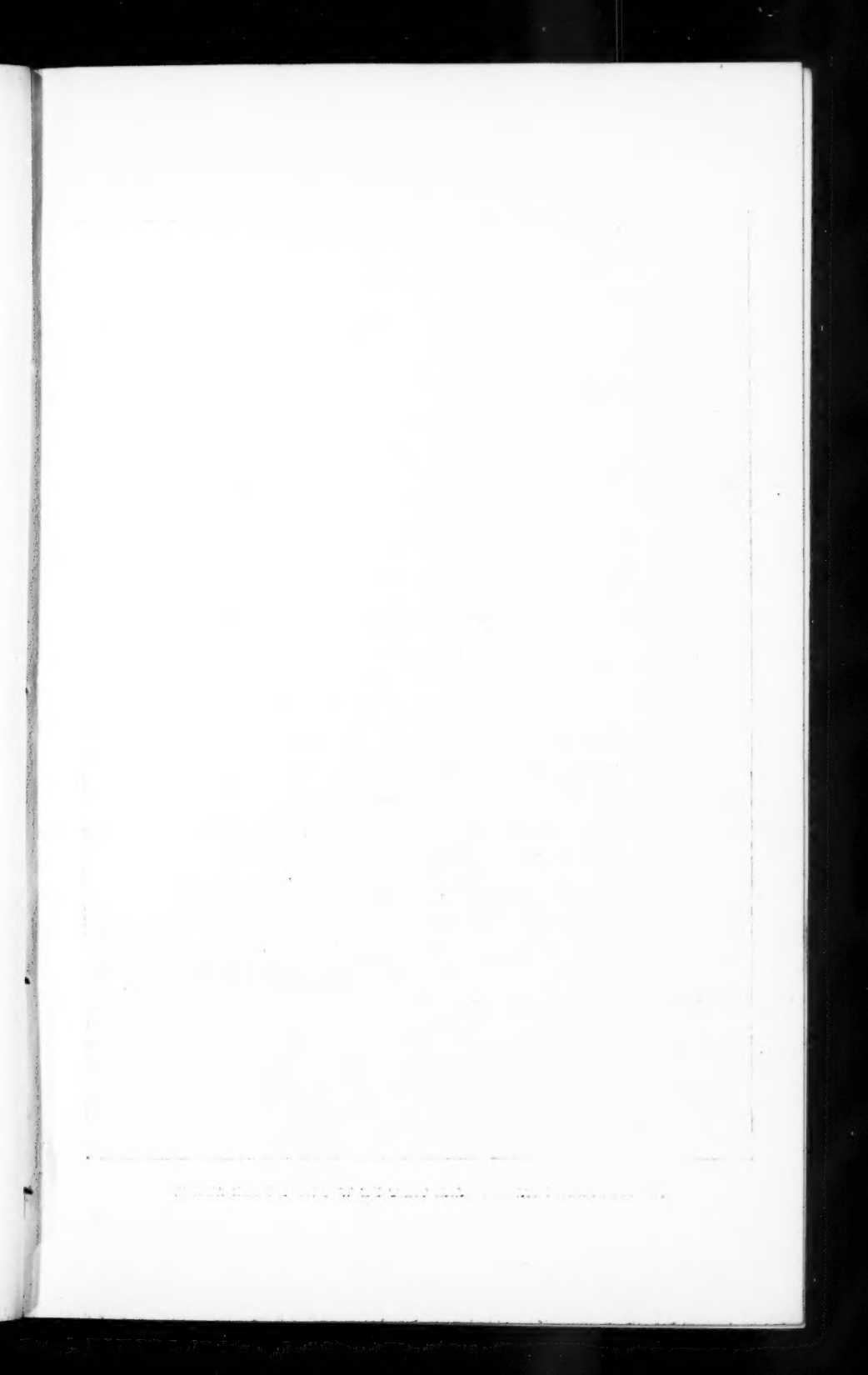
"Isn't this better than Lady W——'s crush?" she asked a few hours later as we sat together in our pretty drawing-room, and I knew that it was meant to show me that she was not disappointed.

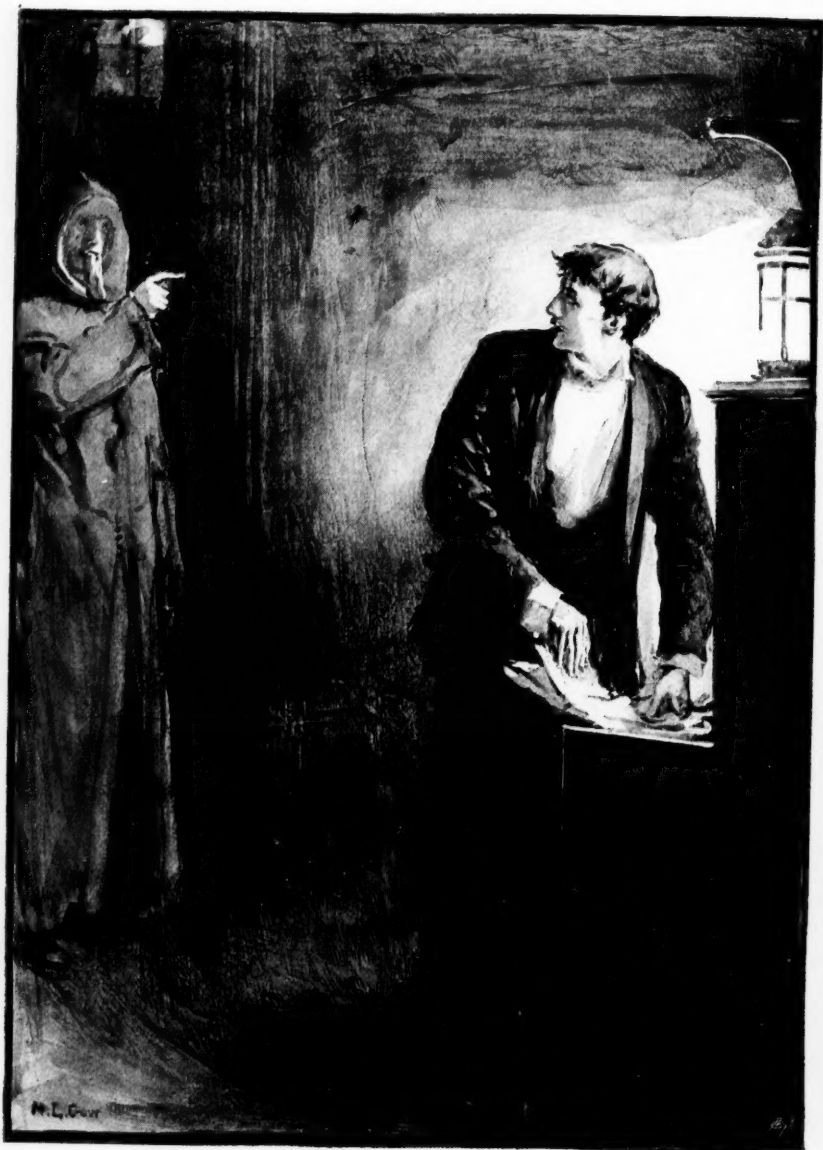
Then I told her of my experiences that day, and at some she laughed, but when I spoke of Big Wingfield, the tears came into her eyes.

"Oh, Harry, we must help him. How fortunate that he came to you! But then you always help everybody."

And I left this delusion of hers undisputed.

E. M. GREEN.





HE SUDDENLY BECAME AWARE THAT HE WAS NO LONGER ALONE.

